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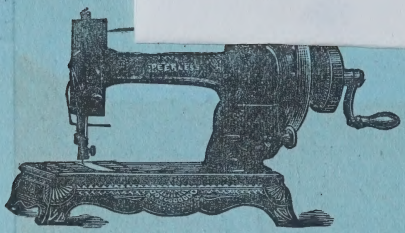

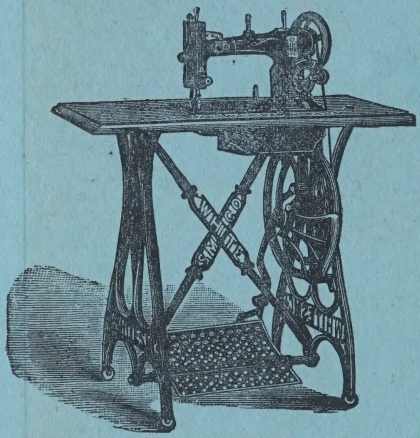

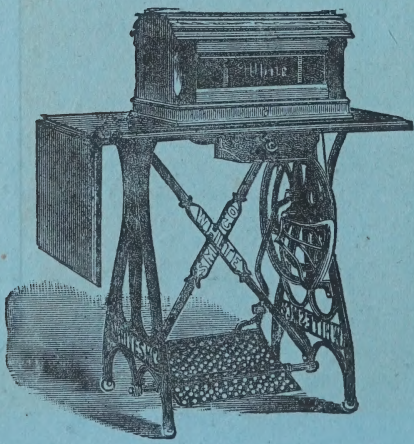

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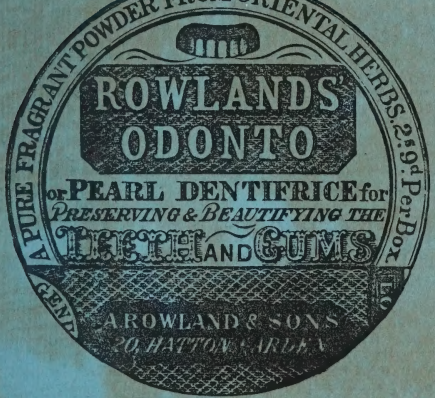
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THE VASTY DEEP.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASSING OF ALDERMAN PARKINSON.

ALDERMAN PARKINSON lay dying.

There was absolutely no hope of his recovery. This he knew, and the knowledge disturbed him but little. Not that the alderman had any wish to die—he loved the good things of this world too much for that; besides, he had a wife and a daughter, to whom he was greatly attached—but he held peculiar views about death.

With him there was no such thing as what is called death. Man, he said, never died, but lived in some shape or other for ever and ever. According to his belief, directly a man's earthly existence was ended, he went to the world of spirits, his position there being determined by his actions and belief whilst on earth.

For his part, his life had been both a respectable and an honest one, and he was fully convinced that he, when his time

came, would go to one of the higher spheres. This in a great measure reconciled him to the inevitable ; for he firmly believed that he would not be parted from his family for very long, but that he would in due course be able to appear to them in "spirit-form."

The alderman was not "mediumistic," but he was what was called a "good sitter." That is, he religiously observed the conditions laid down by the mediums, and had never for a moment questioned the genuineness of any manifestation produced in his presence. He had liberally subscribed to the various spiritualistic institutions, had extended a helping hand to every poor devil of a medium who sought his assistance, and had a séance at his own house daily.

Having done all this for the cause, he had a perfect right to think that he would not be forgotten by the spirits when he departed this world.

"Scoffers," he would say, "will have a hard time of it. It will be years before they reach a sphere sufficiently high to enable them to manifest to their friends on earth; and even then but as mere elementaries." And the worthy alderman would inwardly rejoice at the thought of how much better he himself would fare.

The bed-room in which the sick man lay, betrayed many evidences of his belief in what is called Spiritualism.

On the walls were pictures of celestial beings in the scantiest of raiment trooping down from the skies, the portrait of a noted medium, and the photograph of a fully "materialized spirit." Lying on a table were the latest copies of the Spiritualistic newspapers, and in a case was the waxen cast of a "spirit's" face.[1]

The dying man lay perfectly still. He had a long white beard and whiskers which joined his hair and beard together, but no moustache. His eyes were closed, and the colour of them could not therefore be seen. They were, as a matter of fact, a light blue, and usually had a far-off look in them. His mouth was decidedly weak, and the formation of the jaw, concealed by the heavy white beard, was prejudicial to his being a man of any great strength of character. In truth, he was not a strong man, but, like most weak men, he was very stubborn and tenacious

[1] It is claimed by the Spiritualists that "spirit-forms" have frequently been known to leave waxen moulds of their faces, hands, arms and feet behind at the séances they attend, as souvenirs for the "sitters;" and at most well-regulated séances, buckets of hot wax are kept ready for the "spirits" to make the desired casts.

of an idea once formed, no matter how wrong or how unjust it might be. In business-matters he was exceedingly keen, and he had managed to get together a considerable fortune; but with respect to Spiritualism he was a wild enthusiast.

Nothing was too monstrous or too impossible in the matter of manifestations, and he would quarrel with his best friend if he ventured to differ from him with respect to the "realities" of Spiritualism.

The exposures of the very mediums whose genuineness he had extolled, entirely failed to shake his belief.

"They were genuine when I saw them," he would say; "but there is no knowing when an evil spirit will creep into a circle, or sceptics lay a trap for a medium and force him to appear in an entirely false light."

"I have no faith in these so-called exposures," he would add. "Mediums will, I daresay, trick at times, and so will spirits of the baser kind, but this in no way affects the genuine phenomena I have witnessed."

Alderman Parkinson was what the mediums called a "true believer," and his praises were loudly sung at many a séance, and, what was more, he found himself exceedingly popular with the "spirits"

the mediums called forth. Indeed, as he lay there dying, thoughts of the good time he would have with the "spirits," whose acquaintance he had formed at these séances, when he arrived in the other world, flitted through his mind.

By the bed-side sat the alderman's wife and daughter. The former at the head holding her husband's hand in hers, and the latter at the foot.

It had been the express wish of the dying man that they should be present when the end came, in order that they might be witnesses of the exhibitions of "spirit-power," which a noted medium had assured him might be expected to take place.

Mrs. Parkinson was a handsome woman of about five-and-forty, their daughter Violet being a little over fifteen.

Violet Parkinson was a very sweet and winning girl, with an appearance that gave promise of a beautiful womanhood.

The wife was calm and collected, and whatever grief she felt was not expressed in her face. But her daughter was dissolved in tears, and she watched her father with a look of profound sorrow; for she was warmly attached to him, and the knowledge that she was about to lose him affected her deeply.

The mother and daughter were not the only ones who watched by the bed-side.

Standing close by Mrs. Parkinson was a melancholy-looking individual attired in black.

He was in appearance about forty years of age, clean shaven, and with large, watery, dark eyes that gave him a still more lugubrious appearance.

He might readily have been taken for the undertaker; and as he looked at the dying man, he seemed to be measuring him for his coffin. He was, however, a spirit-medium in whom Alderman Parkinson had great faith.

His name was Brown—Dr. Josiah Brown, as he put on his visiting-cards—and he enjoyed a high reputation as a medium.

Alderman Parkinson, brought up a Baptist, had been what the world calls a "very religious man." But on his conversion to a belief in Spiritualism, he ceased to trouble himself about religious matters, and, instead of attending chapel on Sundays, preferred to have what he termed a "nice little séance" in his own house; and when he found that his illness was hopeless, he refused to allow any minister of religion to visit him.

"What can the parsons tell me?" he

would say. "What do they know of the Hereafter, unless they are mediums? A medium who is in daily communication with spirits alone knows what the other world is like. He is not only permitted to speak with the spirits, to ask them questions, and to receive advice, but he can, when controlled, get glimpses into the spirit-world itself, and see the life that is lived there. Brown," he would add, "has let me have more practical information about the other world in an hour than all the parsons I have ever met.

"No, I don't want any of the clerical fraternity coming here at the last moment disturbing the conditions with useless prayers. I shall get Brown to come and place himself under control, so that when my earth-life is ended, my spirit may be attended to the spheres by suitable spiritual guides."

In this way Brown came to attend the sick-room.

From the moment of Brown's arrival, raps had been heard in the room, and from time to time the dying alderman would turn in his bed and listen with a gratified smile to these indications of "spiritual presence."

"That is a powerful spirit," he said

feebly, partly opening his dimmed eyes, as a knock louder than the others was heard.

"Yes," gravely replied the medium, "it is the spirit of your father."

"My father," mused the alderman. "Is he able to appear?"

"No," answered Brown, "for as yet he is but in the one-hundredth sphere. He died an unbeliever, and with him progression has been slow. But he is now able to manifest by means of raps; and he is glad to think that you believe in the existence of a spirit-world." And a shower of joyful raps sounded on the bed-post nearest the medium.

Mrs. Parkinson looked in the direction from whence the raps appeared to come, and made some remarks about the "dear spirits;" but the young girl said nothing. She only stared and stared into the gathering darkness, as if she had no cognizance of what was going on around her.

Presently the nurse came in with a shaded candle, and put it by the bedside.

The sick man lay quite still, and were it not for his laboured breathing, one might have imagined that he had already ceased to live.

There was silence for awhile. The "spirits" had ceased to rap or further

concern themselves about the man who lay dying, and the tick of a watch upon the dressing-table alone broke the stillness.

It sounded like the tick of a death-watch beneath the wall-paper.

"The end is not far off," said Mrs. Parkinson, looking intently at her husband.

"He leaves earth life for the spirit world," unctuously replied the medium. "Already I see a band of white-robed spirits coming down from the sky to meet him. They are flooded in a gleam of light, and their faces are radiant with happiness;" and Brown turned his watery eyes towards the ceiling.

At this moment the dying man lifted his head a little.

"Are you here, Amelia?" he whispered.

"Yes, I am holding you by the hand."

"Come nearer, then—lean over me, so that I can speak to you. That is it—so."

She leant over him, his lips almost touching her ear.

"You will not forget, my dear," he said. "No black, no mourning. Everything very plain—everything, white, and plenty of flowers; for the spirits love flowers."

"I will not forget," answered his wife.

"And you will not cease to think of me; for although I shall have left this earth-bound existence, I shall ever be near you, and I will take every opportunity of making my presence known to you. So you must remain single, Amelia, for the rest of your earthly existence. This you promise?"

"I promise, dear."

He tried to thank her, but words failed him; but he tightened the pressure on her hand.

During the silence which reigned for awhile, the watch seemed to tick with a still more ghostly echo, whilst the candle spluttered and formed a waxen shroud.

Alderman Parkinson held strong views with respect to people marrying again; and the idea that his wife should seek consolation in another husband when he was gone, struck him with horror. For he held that under certain conditions people had the power to revisit the earth in spirit form; and he was fully of opinion that he would in due course be able to appear "materialized" to his wife. Such being the case, one can understand the poor man's aversion to his wife marrying again. For no spirit, on his return to earth, could be expected to view with equanimity the sight of the wife he left behind him in the arms of a new husband.

We are told that there is no marrying in heaven; but the Spiritualists, who refuse to take the Bible as their guide, not only affirm that marrying does go on in the "celestial spheres," but that a woman may visit her husband, or a man his wife in spirit form on earth, and that "spirit-children" are frequently the outcome of such renewed intercourse.

One man I read of, a short time back, boasted that his "spirit wife" had presented him with twins. What became of the twins I know not; but the happy father was, it is to be hoped, relieved of the responsibility of keeping them. For, alas! one has quite enough to do in solving the question how to provide for our children in this world, without being troubled with the same difficulty in the next.

Whether Alderman Parkinson had in mind the idea of resuming cohabitation with his wife in "spirit-form," I cannot say; anyhow, he did not make any provision in his will for any prospective children. But it was strictly set forth in his will that the income he left his wife should cease on her marrying again.

Like her husband, Mrs. Parkinson was a thorough-going Spiritualist, and she firmly believed in the possibility of keeping up a communication with her husband after

death ; and death was thereby robbed of one-half its terrors.

Violet, their daughter, was too young to know anything about the matter, but it was their earnest wish that she should be brought up a Spiritualist.

The sick man's last thoughts were about his daughter, and he reminded his wife in feeble whispers, as to the course she was to pursue with respect to her education.

"You will not forget," he said, with a final effort at making himself understood.

These were his last words.

He lay quite still after this ; and his wife found the hand which lay in hers grow colder and colder.

"He is going," she said to the medium.

"His earth life has already ended," replied the medium, stepping forward and putting his hand on the stilled heart.

At that moment a loud rap sounded upon the floor, and ghostly fingers seemed to be tapping at the window.

The widow gave a deep sigh, and the medium gasped as if in a trance. The little girl did nothing but watch with awe-stricken eyes, the rustling of the bed-curtains shaken by an invisible hand.

A sudden rush of air put out the light, and in the darkness the spirit of Alderman Parkinson journeyed to "the spheres."

* * * * *

When the will of Septimus Parkinson, of Parkhurst Hall, Arlington, and Bishopsgate Street Within, Alderman of the City of London, was read, it was discovered that the house, its furniture, and plate, together with twelve hundred and fifty a year, had been left to the widow conditional upon her not marrying again. The rest of the property was left to his only child, Violet, who, however, was not to marry without her mother's consent until she should reach the age of five-and-twenty, at which age she would be free to do as she liked. Did she marry without her mother's consent before that age, she would be debarred from benefiting under the will.

Now most young girls—especially if they be good-looking and winsome—do fall in love before they are five-and-twenty, and, as will be seen, this is just what happened to Violet Parkinson. The course of true love, we are told, never runs smooth; and in this story of true love, the reader will find that the adage has not been falsified.

CHAPTER II.

FIVE YEARS AFTER.

Five years have passed since Alderman Parkinson died.

The widow is now fifty, and the child of fifteen is a woman of twenty.

We make their acquaintance again as they sit in the library at Parkhurst.

The mother has by this time grown somewhat stout and massive. The expression of her face is a trifle too hard to be sympathetic, whilst the straightness with which the mouth is drawn, indicates the stubbornness of her nature.

The daughter was not what one would call a beautiful woman—the promise of childhood not having been fully realized; but she was very graceful and winning, and had the loveliest grey eyes imaginable.

Her mouth, which she had inherited from her father, was the weakest feature of her face; but this weakness was counteracted by the steadfastness of the eyes and the determinedness of the brows. For, in spite of the sweetness of her disposition, the young lady had a decided will of her own.

Mrs. Parkinson, who was reading a newspaper, jumped up suddenly with an exclamation of undisguised delight.

"Mr. Gladstone at a séance," she said. "How interesting!" and she ran her eye down the report of a séance Mr. Gladstone had had the night before with a noted spirit medium.

"There! Violet," she continued. "Surely after this no one can pooh-pooh

Spiritualism; for, what Mr. Gladstone believes in, it is not for ordinary folk to doubt."

"That does not follow, mother," replied the young lady. "I, for one, have no great faith in these manifestations. Besides, I am not so ready to take Mr. Gladstone as my guide."

"That comes of your being an unthinking conservative like your father," broke in her mother.

"Not exactly that," replied Violet with a little laugh; "but it doesn't follow that because the Grand Old Man happens to be present at a séance, that he should be a believer."[1]

"Not a believer?" and Mrs. Parkinson's eyes assumed an expression of the deepest surprise. "How can any one witness the manifestations of the dear spirits, and remain an unbeliever? Read the report, my child, and see what it says."

Violet took the paper, and hurriedly glanced through the report referred to.

"Well, mother, what does it all amount to?" she said, when she had finished reading it. "Mr. Gladstone is present at a friend's house, where a séance is being held. A medium produces some manifestations—

[1] It would be interesting to know what Mr. Gladstone really thinks upon this subject.—S.C.

writing on slates, and all that sort of thing —and Mr. Gladstone appears to be puzzled as to how they are done; that is all. He does not say that he either believes or disbelieves in what he saw, preferring to leave the question as he found it—an open one."

"That is Mr. Gladstone's way of putting it, my dear."

"Quite so, mother. For whoever knew him give a hard and fast opinion upon anything, especially upon a question to which there were two sides?" And a roguish little smile played upon Violet's mobile mouth as she finished.

"You are not just, Violet," said her mother somewhat severely. "Mr. Gladstone may be changeable, but he never changes without cause. Although I don't quite agree with him in his later conclusions, I still think him the greatest statesman in England; and if it be true that he is a believer in Spiritualism, it behoves every Spiritualist, irrespective of party, to accord him his hearty support. The belief in Spiritualism is far more widespread than people imagine, and you may depend upon it, my dear, that in becoming a Spiritualist, Mr. Gladstone knows what he is about. Spiritualists have votes, Violet, like other people;" and Mrs. Parkinson's face lit with a knowing smile.

"Mr. Gladstone's conversion," she went on, "will be a good thing for the cause. Those who have dropped their 'home sittings,' will now continue them, and those who have never investigated the subject of spiritualism, will be disposed to commence investigations. For my part, I shall have a medium here every week, to give us and our friends a séance."

"Surely, mother, you can't mean this?" broke in Violet. "You know how the last medium took you in—borrowing money, not only of you, but of your friends, and finally decamping with your gold watch." And Violet gave a look of ill-concealed contempt. The watch to which she referred, had been her father's gift to her mother on her wedding-day, and was of considerable value.

"It is quite true that Professor Smith borrowed a few trifling sums, which one can understand when one knows what a difficulty the poor gifted mediums have to make both ends meet," replied the mother; "but that he stole my watch," she added with warmth, "I will never believe. His explanation that some evil spirit took it in order to cast a slur upon his character is, I firmly believe, the true one. Such things have been done before; and I see no reason why it should not have been so in his case."

"Why, mother, how can you believe in such rubbish?" and, with a shrug of the shoulder and an expression of something like contempt on her mobile face, the young lady threw the newspaper she was holding into a chair by her side.

"Rubbish! how dare you speak to me like that!" was the mother's indignant reply as, with heated countenance, she glared at her daughter.

From an early age, Violet had been brought up to believe in Spiritualism; and for awhile she had been inclined to accept the manifestations she saw produced as genuine exhibitions of "spirit power." But eventually, being a clear-sighted girl of sound common sense, she came to the conclusion that there was little or nothing in Spiritualism after all, and that most of what the medium did, was open to the gravest suspicion.

It should, however, be added, that she did not arrive at this conclusion altogether of her own judgment, being assisted thereto by the counsel and advice of one, upon whom she had recently bestowed her affections.

He was a young surgeon named Alston, the son of a colonel in the British Army, a sturdy, manly young fellow, poor, but clever in his profession, and with ex-

cellent prospects of making his way in life. It had been a case of love at first sight with the young couple; for, in spite of the presumed folly of such a thing, people still fall in love at first sight, and will continue to do so to the end of the world.

Mrs. Parkinson, although she would probably have preferred a more eligible *parti* for her daughter, did not at first raise any particular objection to young Alston, and the young couple looked upon themselves as "engaged." But when she discovered that he was a disbeliever in Spiritualism, and that he denounced all mediums as cheats and imposters, even going so far as to express his intention of throwing the first medium he caught tricking out of the window, her feelings towards him underwent a marked change.

Without being positively rude, Mrs. Parkinson did everything she could to discourage Alston's visits; but when a man of six-and-twenty is in love with a charming girl of twenty, who returns his affection, he is not easily discouraged. He, in fact, was practically oblivious to the mother's coldness, and continued to call and bask in the sunshine of his beloved one's smiles.

Mrs. Parkinson, who was a reasonable enough sort of woman concerning most

things, was dreadfully bigoted respecting all matters appertaining to Spiritualism, and any one who ventured to form an opinion contrary to her own in reference thereto, was not a person calculated to find favour in her eyes.

Intensely superstitious, she had no doubt whatever concerning the power of "spirits" to manifest, and nothing could shake her belief in the "gifted beings" called mediums. She gave large sums to these individuals, and her house was a rendezvous for the weak-kneed men and hysterical women who make up the "true believers" in Spiritualism.

Her anger may therefore well be imagined, when her daughter dubbed her "evil spirit" theory rubbish.

"So you call my explanation rubbish, do you?" she went on again in a tone in which anger and sarcasm struggled for the mastery. "I suppose all Spiritualism is rubbish, since that exceedingly clever young man has thought fit to air his opinions about the subject. But I tell you what, Violet"—and the lady's notes became higher—"I will not have any more of this sort of thing. I may not be able to make you believe in Spiritualism, but I most strongly object to your scoffing at it; at least in my presence."

"I am very sorry, mother," replied Violet, very humbly. "I did not mean to annoy you."

"You will pardon me if I don't place much belief in your sorrow," was the testy reply. "I have noticed the change that has come over your views, not only upon this subject, but upon others since you thought fit to take this Mr. Alston into your confidence; and you will oblige me by dropping the acquaintance."

"Mother!"

There was a world of anguish in this one word.

"Yes, I mean it, Violet," replied her mother, quite unmoved; "and it is of no use looking at me like that. Mr. Alston is not to be thought of, and I must ask you to dismiss him from your thoughts as quickly as possible."

"You do not mean it, mother," and the girl looked with tear-filling eyes at her mother. "Say you do not mean it; say you are just a little vexed at my bad taste and thoughtlessness in contradicting you; but don't say that I am to give up one who is so dear to me. Ah, mother, you know how true he is, how brave, how—" and she commenced to sob upon her mother's shoulder.

"Come, child, that will do," replied

Mrs. Parkinson, softening a little, for she had a kindly heart, and her love for her daughter was in reality very great. "It is no use giving way. I ought, I know, to have spoken before; but I had no idea that he would turn out as he has."

"What has he turned out?" asked the girl between her sobs. "I will not believe anything against him, for I know him to be all that I wish him to be. What has he done, mother, that you should condemn him?"

"Done? Has he not ridiculed my belief in spiritual manifestations, questioned my powers of mediumship, insulted the friends who believe with me, and used threats towards the poor self-sacrificing mediums who have attended my séances?"

"Is that all, mother?" and a smile stole through her tears as she looked up; and had it not been for the cold, stern look upon her mother's face, she would undoubtedly have laughed outright.

"All?" repeated Mrs. Parkinson. "What greater infamy could a man be guilty of? A man who could think as he does, must be lost to all sense of justice and truth; and he is, if the truth were but known, a man of thoroughly brutal instincts." And the good lady's face

flushed crimson with indignation at the thought of poor Alston's depravity.

"You must not say that, mother, it isn't fair," said Violet, bristling up. "He is anything but brutal, and you know it. Besides, mother, it isn't just to condemn every one who doesn't happen to believe with you in this matter. Jack—"

"Jack!" sharply interrupted Mrs. Parkinson.

"Well, Mr. Alston," replied her daughter, with a pout, and a struggle over the last two words. "But why mayn't I call him Jack?" "Jack! Jack!" she said to herself; "how nice it sounds!"

"Because I object to it; the man is nothing to you, can be nothing, and must be nothing."

"Don't say such unkind things, and don't look so hard, mother, for I do love him so much;" and Violet was speeding towards the stage which ends in tears.

"I am cruel but to be kind; and the sooner you forget this man, the better. For I have determined not to choose him for my son-in-law;" and Mrs. Parkinson sat upright in her chair with an air of determination that boded ill for the love affairs of her daughter and the young surgeon.

"But," and there was a look of calmness in her splendid grey eyes, whilst the pout had completely gone out of her pretty rich lips as she spoke, "supposing I have already promised to be his wife?"

"Already promised to be his wife!" and Mrs. Parkinson slowly repeated the words to herself as if she could not at once understand their significance.

"If you have done so," she eventually said aloud, "then I disown you. No, not a penny of my money shall you have. I will leave it all to the Institute for Decayed Mediums, who, poor souls, would doubtless make a far better use of it than you would. Whilst you are, I suppose, fully aware what happens to you if you marry without my consent before the age of twenty-five; perhaps the young man will not be so anxious to marry you when he finds that by marrying without my consent, you will bring him nothing but what you stand upright in."

These words cut deeply into the daughter's sensitive soul, but they had the effect of bringing out all that was strong and determined in her. She faced her mother, who had risen from her seat, with tightly drawn lips and knitted brows. "That is cruel of you, mother," she said, "very cruel, and you know it is not true.

Jack—yes" (and she moved her hand imperiously), "I will call him Jack—loves me, I feel sure, for myself alone, and not for my money; and as for your money, that we do not want. I am sure Jack is clever and hardworking enough to get a living without our having to depend upon you."

There was a pause, during which Mrs. Parkinson drummed ominously on the table with a paper-knife.

Having said so much in defence of him whom she loved, Violet's brows unbent, and the softness came back into her lips and the gentleness into her eyes, and her voice faltered as she again addressed her mother, who had received her previous words in stern silence.

"No, mother," she said, "we do not want your money; but, mother, I do want your love, and your consent."

And, almost before the last word was out of her mouth, she flung her arms around her mother's neck, and wept as if her heart would break.

Mrs. Parkinson was considerably moved at her daughter's tears, but she was fixed in her resolve, and determined not to give way.

"Come, Violet," she said, soothingly, "don't cry. I am sorry to have hurt you; but you know how strongly I feel upon

this matter. How can I let you marry a man who is so antagonistic to everything I hold most dear? I am sure your father would never have given his consent to such a marriage, and in the action I am taking, I am, I feel convinced, but anticipating his wishes. Although your father is not here in the flesh, he is frequently with us in spirit, and even now I seem to feel his presence," and the widow looked as if she were about to take the "*Geist*" of the departed alderman in her arms.

Mrs. Parkinson firmly believed that her husband's shade haunted the house; and she felt convinced that one day he would appear to her, "fully developed." Every day she had a place reserved for him at the dinner-table, in anticipation of his coming, and each dish was handed in front of the vacant chair in case the deceased alderman should take it into his head to put in an appearance hungry and a-thirst.

Not an evening passed but that the widow consulted her husband's wishes through the medium of a small round table; and she claimed to have received some remarkable communications from spirit-land in this way.

"Since your father passed away, I have tried to be both a father and a mother to you," continued Mrs. Parkinson.

"You have, mother," sobbed poor Violet.

"And whilst looking after your earthly welfare, I have not neglected the possibilities of the future. I have not only had the best mediums procurable, but I have taken you to all the important séances in London and Paris in order that you might obtain a thorough insight into the realities of Spiritualism, so that when your time comes for passing into another sphere, you may not be placed at a disadvantage."

Mrs. Parkinson held very strongly that the pleasures of "earth-life" were nothing as compared with those of the other world; and I am almost inclined to think that if she had her choice, she would rather have one who was dear to her with her in the spirit than in the flesh. True it is that whilst her husband was alive, she had not displayed any particular affection towards him, but immediately he passed away into "spirit-land," she developed an affection for him, of the most ardent description; and whereas in actual life she had experienced a great difficulty in listening to what she termed his "prosings" for a few minutes together, she was now content to sit at a table for hours to get even a single rap from him.

Violet, a healthy-minded, lovable little

girl, had no such ideas, and, as was natural at her age, preferred to taste of the pleasures of this world to living in expectation of those to come in the next. She had no desire to see the time come when she would pass away to the "spheres" to which her mother referred; and, wiping away her tears, she promptly told her so.

"Indeed, mother," she concluded, "if it is all the same to you, I would rather be just a good little girl and remain where I am, than be ever so good a spirit in the spheres."

"I am sorry to hear you say so," replied Mrs. Parkinson with a sigh. "What is this world, with its disappointments, troubles, and hardships, to the unalloyed happiness of the next? You, after all the trouble I have taken, are ungrateful; but you will rue your scepticism in the end. For, as the dear mediums tell us, believers go at once to a sphere which unbelievers can only reach after years of laborious progression."

At this Violet laughed. It was very rude of her perhaps, but the temptation to do so was irresistible.

"But Jack, mother," she said, in considerable merriment, "doesn't believe in this going up one theory. He says it's all fudge."

"All fudge, does he," hastily added Mrs. Parkinson, with considerable sternness. "Mr. Alston is a very objectionable man, and I positively shudder to think of the years of darkness in which his spirit will have to grope ere it reaches the light!"[2]

[2] Since the above was written, Mr. Goddard, of the Metropolitan Board of Works, who, in his earthly dealings, appears to be a remarkably keen hand at striking a bargain, has been giving his views concerning "spiritual spheres," and the following remarkable letter from him was read at a recent meeting of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the irregularities of the Board: "I need not say that I am not in comfort or peace, and I shall be very glad when it is over. Now for other matters. I have gone into spiritualism very largely—have séances every Monday evening, and have been in communication with wife, father, mother, departed friends of all kinds and conditions. My wife's lips have been pressed on my hands more than once—my dear boy's hands in mine. There are two things in the Catholic faith made manifest—guardian angels and purgatorial. Those of bad life—unrepentant sin—continue in the earth's circle for a long period; and men's vices on earth are the instrument of punishment when out of it. When removed, the spirits of the higher circles are made instrumental in the redemption of their earth-bound relatives, and when removed to a higher sphere, are made instrumental as messengers flitting from all the radiant spheres of spiritual activity. The other night my daughter Edith was made serviceable to a friend who was in illness and trouble in Adelaide. The knowledge is very comforting, lifts you to a broader conception of the real life, and lessens the desire to cling to this. The constant

"But," chimed in Violet, with a twinkle in her eye, "he doesn't want to be a spirit —at least, not just yet; but to live and—"

"Marry you, I suppose," interrupted her mother, correctly interpreting what her daughter would have said. "Such a thing as I have already told you is entirely out of the question. The idea is too dreadful to think of calmly for a single moment. You with your fine spiritualized nature, allied to such a terribly mundane creature as that; bless me, what would the children be like?"

"Mother!" exclaimed the young girl, and her face was suffused with blushes.

"Well," added her mother, "it is not likely to come to that, for the marriage shall not take place if I can help it."

"Listen to me, Violet," she went on, rebuking her daughter, who sought to

presence of my dear wife, with whom I daily communicate, would have saved me from the egregious follies of the past; but I understand her purgatory was the anxiety for her children, lest I should impoverish them by my terrible folly. Hence the noises and manifestations in my house. Now the complete silence." It would be interesting to know to what sphere Mr. Goddard anticipates he will go when he passes into "spirit-land," and whether the "messengers" who flit about the "radiant spheres of spiritual activity" receive commissions.—S.C.

interrupt her, with a stern look. "You know the thing is impossible. Your father believed in Spiritualism, and so do I; and it is nothing but right that you should do so too, yet you wish to marry a man who is not only a sceptic, but who in a very little while will make you as bad as himself."

"Oh, mother, he is so good."

"You may think so; and *perhaps* after all, he is really attached to you and not to your money" (Mrs. Parkinson found it impossible to avoid this passing cut), "but this does not do away with the fact that he is not the person you should choose for a husband. I do not deny that he is clever, and although at present he is as poor as a curate, his prospects appear to be good; but you have something more than merely worldly prospects to consider. Now don't interrupt me, and pace up and down in that absurdly irritating fashion, but have a little common sense, and listen to what I have to say. Suppose we admit that you marry this man."

"Yes, mother," cried Violet, with great eagerness.

"I said suppose," was the curt reply, at which Violet was duly rebuked; "and not that there is any prospect of such a thing taking place in reality. Well, supposing

you married him, what would be the result. All the years of careful training in a knowledge of the spirit-work would in an instant be thrown away; you would become a sceptic, live the life of a sceptic, and when you pass away from this world, where do you expect to go to?"

"To heaven, I hope," gravely replied her daughter.

"That may be; but to what sphere? Why, to the lowest; whilst your father and mother can only look down upon you pityingly from that higher sphere to which you would have gone had you believed with us. Heaven is simply a question of spheres, and according to how we act in this world will our position in the next world be decided. By marrying such a man as this Mr. Alston, all chance of gaining one of the higher spheres, save by progressive stages, will be taken from you."

"But we should at least be together," replied Violet, somewhat hotly.

"Have you, then, no thought for your parents?" indignantly answered her mother. "Has all our thought for you been thrown away, ungrateful girl."

"I do not wish to be ungrateful, mother; but I do wish to be with Jack so much."

"Jack again," said Mrs. Parkinson to

herself. "What a horribly mundane name! Fancy a spirit of the name of Jack. What could his godfathers and godmothers have been about in giving him such a name?"

"I almost think, mother, I could even be just a little wicked," continued Violet, "if I thought my superior knowledge of Spiritualism would take me to a sphere higher than the one you say he will go to, in order to be with him. But, mother, how do you know Jack is in earnest? Perhaps after all he was only in fun when he chaffed the spirits."

"Chaffed the spirits!" said her mother, with a look almost of horror upon her face. "Chaffed the spirits, Violet. How can you make use of such words?"

"I mean, doubted the realities of Spiritualism and all that sort of thing," was the humble reply. "It is just possible, mother, that it was only his fun; for you know how full of fun he is."

"Ah, if I could only think so," said her mother, considerably mollified; for she would forgive any one—even a murderer—if he expressed a belief in Spiritualism.

"I am sure he is anxious to be convinced," continued Violet, "and if any one could but convince him, see what a great thing it would be for the cause.

You know what you have always said about the value of turning a scoffer into a believer."

Violet had no great faith in what she said, for although her lover had often expressed a wish to be convinced of the reality of the manifestations, she knew he had far too much common sense to become a believer in Spiritualism. But under the circumstances, she thought a little diplomatic untruth excusable, and it certainly had the desired effect.

The bait was too tempting for Mrs. Parkinson to refuse, and she swallowed it at a gulp, and all the harsh things she had previously thought of the young man.

"Are you sure he is willing to be convinced?" she asked her daughter in a kindlier tone than any she had yet adopted.

"Yes, I am quite sure," was the reply, "although," she added to herself, "I don't know who will be able to convince him."

"I am glad of that," said Mrs. Parkinson, "for I have looked upon him as being absolutely incorrigible; but then" (with a smile) "you, of course, know him so much better than I do."

"I am so glad to hear you speak like that, mother; and now you are the dear old mother again, you will not condemn Jack unheard;" and with a little spring,

Violet threw her arms round her mother's neck and kissed her.

"Very well, Vi," said her mother, "he shall have a chance of proving his belief, but if he misconducts himself, he goes out of our house, never to darken it again. That you quite understand?"

"Yes, mother," was the simple reply, although at heart Violet was full of fear lest she might not be able to persuade her lover to abandon his antagonism towards Spiritualism.

"Well, he shall have that chance, and perhaps this very day."

"To-day?"

"Yes, to-day, for I have invited Dr. Brown to come here and give us a séance."

"That horrid fellow," muttered Violet.

"To-day, Violet, is the fifth anniversary of your father's death, and I have arranged this séance with the hope that your father may be able to appear fully materialized. I have, through Dr. Brown's aid, discovered that it is his wish to appear in spirit form, for by to-night, he will have reached the 139th sphere, when materialization becomes possible. How I long to see him and to clasp him in my arms," and Mrs. Parkinson gazed rapturously at the ceiling as if she expected the plaster to give way,

and the form of the defunct Alderman to come tumbling through.

"Pray don't, mother," said her daughter; "it makes me feel quite nervous."

"Nervous, child?" exclaimed Mrs Parkinson, in surprise. "What? nervous at seeing the spirit of your father, who is, as the mediums tell us, so perfectly happy."

"If he is so happy, mother, why not let him remain where he is?" was Violet's sensible rejoinder.

"You do not understand the matter," said her mother. "We should take every opportunity of communicating with those in the Spirit world, and thus learn the conditions which govern the life beyond. Materialization is the highest form of manifestation; and it is only through the most powerful medium that materialization can take place. I have been waiting for the time when your father's spirit should have sufficiently progressed to be able to fully materialize; and that time has now arrived. This time last year, your father was but in the one hundredth sphere, and at the séance in Bloomsbury, you will remember, he could do no more than materialize a hand; but now I am assured he will be able to appear in full form."

"But, mother, surely you do not think

it was *his* hand that touched you; it was in the dark, you know, and one could easily be mistaken," replied Violet in dubious tones.

"Think, Violet? why, I am certain. Just as if I don't remember the touch of *his* hand. And to-night, if all is well, I shall see him fully developed."

"Mother, spare me this. I'm sure I could not sit out such a séance," pleaded poor Violet, much distressed.

"What, afraid, child? Why, you ought to be rejoiced at the idea of seeing your father again. Besides, it is most important you should be present at the séance."

"That I should, mother?"

"Yes, for I purpose taking the opportunity of getting your father's decision upon a matter which closely affects you."

"Affects me, mother; what do you mean?"

"Why, I promised your father to seek to know his wishes in all things, and his last words had special reference to you," gravely replied Mrs. Parkinson. "'Promise me,' he said, 'if any doubt exists in your mind as to the suitability of Violet's selection of a husband before she arrives at the age when she is free to choose for herself, to seek to know my

opinion upon the matter.' These were his last words, and I promised to do as he wished. So, before you can hope to marry this Mr. Alston, *you must first get the consent of your father's spirit.*"

CHAPTER III.

VIOLET BREAKS THE NEWS TO JACK.

It was in vain that Violet pointed out the absurdity of such a thing as her marriage with Alston being dependent upon getting the consent of what purported to be her father's spirit, "materialized" through the mediumship of Dr. Brown. Her mother remained obdurate.

Had Mr. Alston been different, she said, she might have acted otherwise; but his avowed scepticism gave her no choice.

"But, mother," exclaimed Violet, by way of final appeal, "how can you expect a man of common sense like Jack to consent to such an arrangement?"

"Mr. Alston," curtly replied the good lady, "has nothing whatever to do with the matter."

"You cannot say that," angrily responded her daughter, "for he has everything to do with it."

"I do not intend to argue the matter. My decision is final."

Having said this, Mrs. Parkinson marched out of the room, leaving her daughter in a state of fear and agitation.

For some moments after her mother had left, Violet walked abstractedly up and down the room, and then sat down to write a letter to Alston, explaining how matters stood.

So absorbed was she in what she was writing, that she did not hear the door slowly open, or the footsteps coming behind her.

The newcomer was a well-built young man of about six-and-twenty, with a frank, fearless face, wavy, reddish-brown hair, and a clear, honest look in his hazel eyes that put him at once on a good footing with all with whom he came in contact.

He stepped lightly behind the young girl's chair quite unheard by her, and in a moment had put his hands over her eyes.

At this Violet starts, and gives a little shriek.

"Who is this?" she asks, tearing herself away, and turning round. "What, you, Jack? Why, I thought it was a spirit."

"A spirit?" cries the young man, laughing heartily. "Come, Vi, do I look

like a spirit?" and he poses before her in all his superb muscular development.

"No, Jack, you are much too substantial," is the young lady's remark, eyeing him the while with unstinted admiration.

"Do I feel like a spirit?" and his strong right arm goes round her waist as she rises before him. "And, my darling, do I kiss like a spirit?" and his lips met hers with a distinct physical smack.

"I don't know what a spirit's kiss is like," answers the young girl demurely; "but Daisy Drummond and several other girls I know say they are often kissed at the dark séances—and I suppose it is the spirits who do it."

"The spirits, you sly little puss," replies the young man, with a hearty laugh; "but," and his face is grave all at once, "I would like to see the spirit who would dare to kiss my little sweetheart. Hang me if I wouldn't punch his spiritual head;" and he brought his right hand down upon the palm of his left with a force that boded ill for any head, spiritual or otherwise, with which his fist might come in contact.

"But fancy a girl, anyhow," he continued, "liking to be kissed by a spirit! Bah! what taste."

"I must confess," slyly answered his companion, "that for my part I prefer something more substantial."

Instantly his arms were about her, and his kisses were showered upon her lips, her cheeks, and her forehead.

"Please, Jack, let me go," she said, making a feeble attempt at breaking from his arms. "That is quite enough, Jack; I am quite satisfied."

With this he releases her, whilst she smoothes her hair, which has become somewhat disarranged.

Having done this, she drew some distance away, and said with a serious look, which Jack had never seen before on her face.

"Now, Jack, I have something serious to tell you."

"Something serious, Violet, what can that be?"

"Yes, Jack, very serious;" and for a moment she hesitated. "Mother won't give her consent to our marriage."

"Not give her consent, darling?" and the tone of his voice was one of the deepest astonishment; "what do you mean? What has happened?"

"Well, Jack, it is just this. Mother is deeply offended at the way you run down the mediums, and she says that unless you abandon your present attitude towards Spiritualism, she will have nothing more to do with you."

"What, does your mother expect me to become a Spiritualist?" he replied, with

unusual bitterness. "When I become insane, I may be one; but at present I hope I am far too sane to believe in any such rubbish as this latter-day Spiritualism."

"Not exactly that, Jack," said the young girl soothingly; "but you needn't run down the mediums, and say that everything they do is all trickery and humbug."

"But it is true; and, after all, what is a medium? Why, frequently nothing better than a third-rate conjuror; and it happens that a man who fails in everything else in life suddenly discovers that he is mediumistic, theosophistic, spiritualistic, or some other istic with a supernatural twist, and in due course sets himself up as a medium. To him go the weak-kneed and emotional of both sexes, and for a certain metallic consideration, he undertakes to produce the spirits of the departed, and parade them in front of the fools who claim to recognize them. Put a mobcap on a broomstick and exhibit it at a séance, and there will be sure to be some one who will recognize in it the fully materialized form of a long-lost relative. Faugh! The whole thing is too idiotic to think about; yet you say your mother raises serious objections to me because I disbelieve in such nonsense."

"Well, you see, dear," and Violet smoothed his forehead, which had become very stern, with her hand, "it is a serious matter with mother. Spiritualism is a religion with her. She believes in the mediums thoroughly, and has no doubt about the manifestations being the genuine work of spirits; and although I do not believe in them now, I, before I met you, Jack, was inclined to think there was something in them. Now I believe with you, that everything can be explained naturally; but you must be patient with mother, for everything depends upon her goodwill. I cannot, as you know, marry without her consent for ever so long; by which time, I fear, you would have forgotten all about me;" and she beat her little foot on the carpet.

"Forget all about you, my darling; how can you say such a thing? Why, if it isn't for a century!" And the young lover's eyes looked a lifetime of devotion.

"You won't, anyhow, have to wait so long as that," replied the girl with a merry little laugh; "and if you are sensible, you can—" Here she hesitated; and the young man was not slow to fill in the blank.

"What, marry you in a week?" he

exclaimed, whilst his hands drew her sweet little face towards him.

"No, not quite so soon as that," she said with a faint blush and a slight dropping of the eyes. "But, Jack, I have not told you all." And her face became grave in a moment.

"Not told me all, Vi?"

"No;" and she explained to him the strange decision her mother had arrived at.

Alston listened with manifest impatience, and when she had finished, broke forth with an exclamation of profound disgust. "This is really monstrous, Vi," he said. "Is it not enough to ask a man to adopt a neutral attitude towards those rascally mediums, without expecting one to place one's future happiness in their hands? I won't entertain for a moment any such idiotic condition," and the young man paced angrily up and down the room.

"But, Jack, what is one to do?"

"Do? Why, leave the whole lot to their own devices. And, Vi," he continued, gazing earnestly into her eyes, "if you loved me as I love you, you would brave all."

"Ah, Jack! how little you know me; how little you understand my love for

you!" and her eyes shot a look of deep reproach.

"Forgive me, Vi; I did not mean that. I know how much you really love me; but all this makes me so angry, that I forget myself."

Violet at once kissed him. What else could she do? Alston was so very penitent.

"But try not to forget yourself, dear. Be patient, and all will come right. If the worst comes to the worst, we can wait," she said.

"But why should we wait?" he replied, somewhat impatiently. "Under your father's will, you are debarred from inheriting the property he left, if you marry against your mother's wish before you are five-and-twenty. You are only twenty, and why should you waste five of the best years of your life in waiting for your mother's consent? She will, I am assured, never accept me; for I can never sympathize with her delusions. I cannot play the fool and hypocrite. What do we care for the money, my darling. I am poor, it is true; but I have a strong arm, and can work; and my practice is already enough to keep the wolf from the door. Let us gang our ain gait, dear, and leave your mother and her

mediums to take care of themselves. Come, say you will marry me at once."

He pleaded with an earnestness that was hardly to be denied; and for a moment it seemed as if the young girl would consent. The picture of wedded happiness with the one she loved, contrasted with that of the somewhat monotonous life at home, almost decided her to say "Yes." But the thought of how lonely her mother would be without her, and how much better it would be to bring her husband wealth to help him on in his profession, instead of bringing him nothing, made her pause. Violet was a very sensible girl, and a dutiful one into the bargain; and whilst it seemed indiscreet to marry upon nothing, it appeared altogether wrong to defy her mother, who had hitherto shown her so much kindness.

"Is it yes, dear?" Jack held her hands tightly in his.

"No, Jack! It must be 'No' for the present;" and she looked him straight in the eyes without flinching. "We must first endeavour to get mother's consent. It is not so much the money I am thinking about —although I don't want to come to you penniless—but I don't think it right to marry in defiance of mother's wishes. She has been very good to me, always; and it

is but just that I should consider her. Besides, dear, we should stand by mother, and not run away and leave her in the hands of these mediums. They will not only rob her, but may in the end drive her mad between them. We must stand by her, Jack; and you must do what you can to make her break with these Spiritualists. Reason with her, dear, and be patient with her."

"What can I do?" said Alston. "I have reasoned with her, but to no good."

He had in truth reasoned with her, and had got himself heartily disliked in consequence. For your thorough-going Spiritualist hates to be reasoned with, and you might as well try and turn a river from its course as reason a Spiritualist out of a belief in Spiritualism.

Mrs. Parkinson was even more bigoted than the ordinary run of "true believers." For in addition to being a believer in Spiritualism, she professed to be "mediumistic," and she would accept as positive evidence of "spirit-presence" every movement made by the little round table upon which she placed her hands. She also claimed to be able to see "spirits," to hear them, and to even smell them; and when alone, she would enter into conversation with the ghostly visitors, whose footsteps she

believed she heard, or whose forms she imagined she saw.

It was in vain that Alston pointed out that her mediumship was altogether imaginary, and that it was she who unconsciously made the table wobble, and not the "dear spirits."

"You place your hands upon the table," he had said, "and imagine that the spirits will tip it, and so lost are you in the expectation that this will be done, that you unconsciously tip it yourself. Table-tipping is merely the result of a sitter's unconscious muscular action. Pray do not misunderstand me. I do not say you tip the table consciously, but that it is your muscular pressure all the same which causes the table to move. And as for the forms, you see they are subjective and not objective, and with respect to the footsteps you hear, it is a mere hallucination."

Mrs. Parkinson, however, emphatically declined to believe anything of the kind, and she strongly resented Alston's common-sense explanation of the matter, and, so he said to Violet, "what can *I* do?"

He had done all he could to dissuade her from a belief in such nonsense, and had been roundly abused for his pains.

"I have done all I can, Violet; and anything I might say would only make matters worse," he said somewhat mournfully. "I see no way out of it, except by pleasing ourselves."

"But it would not please *me*, Jack, to marry without mother's consent," replied Violet with a rebellious front. "If you were only a little more diplomatic, you might not only win her consent, but save her from the influence of these dreadful people."

"I have it," he suddenly exclaimed after a pause; and he whispered something to his sweetheart.

"What do you think of my plan?"

"It is a good one," she said, "and I can only hope it may succeed."

At this moment a shadow fell across the window facing the path leading to the house; and a ring at the bell announced the arrival of Dr. Josiah Brown, spirit medium.

CHAPTER IV.

A NOTED MEDIUM.

Mr. Josiah Brown, or, as he called himself, Dr. Josiah Brown (although what he was a doctor of, or where he obtained his

diploma, none seemed to know) was a very distinguished personage in his way.

He was a spirit medium. Not one of those half-starved individuals who eke out a miserable existence in one of the bye-streets running out of Gray's Inn Road, by giving dark séances at 2*s.* 6*d.* a head, but a man of reputation and position. In Spiritualistic jargon he was "a most powerful medium for strong physical manifestations." As a "materializer of spirit forms" he had no equal, and he was much sought after by that section of society which dabbles in the supernatural.

As a rule, a professional medium does not attempt more than one form of spirit mediumship; but Brown seemed to be proficient in "mediumship" in all its branches, and he would get the "spirits" to rap upon tables, write messages on slates, untie knots, or deliver "trance orations." He did not, however, produce "spirit drawings," which might be explained from the fact that he himself knew nothing of art.

His speciality, however, was materialization, and his "materialized forms" were famed for their close resemblance to those whom they purported to represent.

Since we last saw him at the bed-side of the dying alderman, he had travelled much,

being in great request on the Continent. On one occasion it had been his privilege to give his manifestations before the Czar of All the Russias, who is a great believer in Spiritualism, and his Majesty was said to be satisfied with what he saw. He had also managed to impress other imperial and royal personages before whom he appeared; and so far he had never once been caught tricking.

But all the same he was a consummate rascal, and his immunity from exposure was simply the result of the care he took in producing the manifestations, and his selection of the sitters before whom they were produced.

In appearance he was meek and inoffensive, slim of figure, and short of stature, with a cat-like tread that enabled him to play the spy to perfection. His age was difficult to fix. He gave most people the impression of being but forty, whilst in reality he was close upon fifty. He was slightly bald, but the hair that was left was a deep black, very sleek, and always profusely oiled. He had neither moustache nor beard, but a few lank hairs straggled down each side of his face, did duty for whiskers.

His eyes were deep set and cunning, and there was a furtive look in them that made

an unfavourable impression on every one with any pretence to character reading; but as he professed to be near-sighted—although for the matter of that no one could see more distinctly than he could—he invariably wore blue spectacles, which hid from casual view the most objectionable feature of his face. His hands were thin and bony, and they seemed to crack every time you shook him by the hand; indeed many of the "little spirits'" raps were simply the snapping of his finger-joints, whilst the more "advanced spirits" made themselves heard through the displacement of his knee-caps and his right big toe. He was as supple as an eel, and could wriggle himself out of any ropes, and his cabinet tests were the wonder of the hour, even learned and scientific men expressing their inability to explain how they were done.

More of the spirits he produced were recognized by the sitters than those of all the mediums put together, and one old lady had left him a legacy on the strength of his having materialized an admirable likeness of her husband; whilst a distraught mother had gone mad after seeing what purported to be the form of a little son she had recently lost appear in a circle at which she was present, so true did the likeness seem to her.

"Dr." Brown, in addition to making considerable sums out of his mediumship, was the secretary and treasurer of the International Psychical Exploration Association—with a salary. This association had a long list of members, and the subscriptions in the course of a year amounted to a goodly sum; but no balance sheet had ever been published, and when one somewhat sceptical gentleman ventured, at one of the general meetings to ask what became of the moneys subscribed, he was promptly sat upon by those present. For, as the "Doctor" said, such a question constituted a gross reflection upon the band of spirits by whom the business relations of the association were controlled.

"The President of the Association," replied Brown to a subscriber, who was asking for information upon the matter, "is a spirit, the council consists of spirits, the auditors are spirits, and I am its secretary and treasurer."

Such an explanation, needless to say, was perfectly satisfactory to every "true believer," who subscribed to the association's funds.

Altogether, "Dr." Brown had every reason to congratulate himself on his success in life. Success, it is true, had

come somewhat late in the day; for, before he took up with spirit mediumship, his career had been one succession of failures. He had tried everything by turns—from card sharping on suburban racecourses, to letting himself out as an "awful example" at temperance meetings —but either through want of application or the unsuitability of the work he took up with, he stuck to nothing very long. But in a good moment for him, he fell in with some people who were Spiritualists, and through them, attended a séance. He was shrewd enough to see how the manifestations were worked; and he was not long in coming to the conclusion that he could work them as well as any of the mediums.

He decided to become a medium, and he attended a great number of séances, in order to get a thorough insight into the various tricks of the trade. In due course, he expressed his belief that he was "mediumistic," and gave some exhibitions of his powers to a circle of believers, who at once came to the conclusion, that he was a genuine medium of great promise.

His skill as a manipulator of the three-card trick, and his knowledge of conjuring generally stood him in good stead, whilst his association with the goody-goody folk

of Exeter Hall enabled him to play the "sanctimonious racket" with effect.

"He is such a good man, so thoroughly earnest, so very moral" would say some people, deceived by his appearance. "And such a strict teetotaller, too," would add others, who had never seen the "Doctor" in his cups.

Brown always assured every one that he positively abhorred intoxicating liquors, although, as a matter of fact, he was by no means averse to either wine or spirits.

With his peculiar gifts, Brown's rise as a medium had been very rapid, and, at the time I write, he was at the top of the mediumistic ladder.

Lying and cheating were perfectly natural to Brown; and this trading upon people's credulity was a work after his own heart.

He was a pitiless, cold-blooded creature, who could witness a mother's anguish or a man's deep sorrow with absolute indifference; and he positively chuckled with grim delight when his "manifestations" had an extra effect upon the over-wrought nerves of his "sitters."

The séance he was on the point of giving at Parkhurst, was one in which he took a more than passing interest. The late alderman had always proved a most liberal

patron, and he felt convinced that if he succeeded in making an effect upon the widow, he might judiciously bleed her for the rest of her life.

It was therefore with a feeling of profound satisfaction that the worthy "Doctor" presented himself at Parkhurst, exactly five years from the date when he had caused the "spirits" to manifest their presence in the dead alderman's bed-room, for which little exhibition of mediumship, he received the handy little sum of one hundred pounds.

CHAPTER V.

THE WORK OF AN "EVIL SPIRIT."

"Dr." Brown was shown by the servant who answered the bell into the drawing-room, and immediately the door closed upon her, he commenced to take his bearings, as it were.

"Not a bad room for a light séance," he muttered to himself, as he glanced round the room. "Those trees make plenty of shadow in the daytime, and one could manage a few things with the sitters at the other end of the room. But for a dark séance, this room is altogether out of the question."

"Those blinds," and he motioned with supreme disgust to the Venetian blinds which served to darken the long French windows opening on to the lawn, "would let in the light far too much. But they must have a special séance-room in a house like this. Special séance-room," he chuckled; "how easy these Spiritualists make things for us." And it was with difficulty that the great medium could restrain himself from laughing outright. He walked up and down the room, noting every article that caught his eye, so that in the end he could have accurately described the room's contents.

"They seem a long time coming," he muttered. "I have half a mind to prepare a little fake before they come; there's nothing like these impromptu manifestations for fetching them. Impromptu by previous arrangements," and the doctor chuckled heartily; or rather, as heartily as he was capable of chuckling. The doctor's was not a merry nature.

He paused a few moments as if in thought, and then he went to the door, opened it and peered into the passage. All was silent. He closed the door and went to the windows and looked out. No one was in sight.

"I'll try it," he said; and putting his

hand in his pocket, he fetched out his pocket-book.

"Yes, the invisible silk's all right;" and he ran a piece of the finest silk thread, to which was attached a small bent pin, through his fingers.

"I wonder how the floor is for sound." He pressed his foot on the carpet, and raps were immediately produced.

Spirit-rapping is not, as most sceptics would believe, and as some conjurors attempt to explain, brought about by mechanical appliances, or by some one hammering on the wall, or on the ceiling; for with appliances, a medium would stand a chance of being discovered, and it would be exceedingly risky to employ confederates to do the tapping. Confederates have a nasty knack of cutting up rough when they are not paid regularly, or when actuated by motives of jealousy. Mediums are frequently asked before giving a rapping séance, to take off their boots; and I have known some of them to be thoroughly searched in an adjoining room before taking their place at the séance. This no first-class "rapping medium" can object to, for it is not by such precautions that the medium will be prevented from rapping.

At every well-regulated séance, "spirit

raps" are neither the result of mechanical appliances nor confederacy, but are brought about by the medium displacing some muscle or tendon of his body.

By displacing the *peroneus longus* muscle, or the ball of the big toe, the knee-cap, or the ankle blades, raps can be produced at will; and there are many people who, without being "mediums," can work such physical displacement.

The true believer will, of course, at once say that this is absurd; for has he not heard raps come from another part of the room to that in which the medium has been sitting?

With him, however, it has simply been a case of imagination, for it is exceedingly difficult and next to impossible to tell the direction of sound, unless the eye can see what produces the sound.

So when a "sitter" is told that a "spirit" may rap on a table at another end of the room, and he turns his attention to that table, his expectation and concentrated attention lead him to believe when a rap is heard that the spirit has rapped thereon, when in reality it is the medium cracking a toe-joint or replacing a displaced tendon.

I never could understand why "spirits" should prefer tables to any other article of furniture through which to communicate with mortals, and I really see no reason

why a "spirit," if he can move a table, should not have a clothes-horse or a pair of tongs equally under control.

But, as the mediums will tell you, you "can't dictate to the dear spirits in such matters." And the dear, trusting creatures who form the rank and file of Spiritualists, believe what the mediums tell them.

The fact is, a table is the most sociable of all downstair furniture, and people will sit round a table, when they wouldn't sit round an arm-chair or an escritoire; and people, I suppose, think it more dignified to go waltzing round the room under spiritual influence with their hands upon a neatly-turned table, than with a clothes-horse or a pair of tongs. Again, see what a lot of things the "spirits" can do underneath a table without being seen.

It will therefore be observed that in selecting the table as the principal article of furniture through which the "dear spirits" should convey their wishes to the domestic circle, the mediums, acting for "the spirits," displayed considerable common-sense.

Having found his toe-joints in working order, and the floor serviceable for rapping on, Brown proceeded to think out some "impromptu manifestation."

He scanned the room thoroughly, and

tried the weight of sundry little articles which stood on the mantel-shelf. He took hold of a small table, but it apparently did not move sufficiently smoothly on its castors to please him.

"Ah, the very thing," he said, as his eyes suddenly lighted on a vase containing a spray of flowers.

He made for the vase; and the tender way in which he handled its contents would have led one to believe that he was a great lover of flowers. But in reality flowers were no more to him than cabbage stalks.

He was simply arranging a little experiment.

The little experiment—in which the invisible silk and bent pin played an important part—having been arranged to the Doctor's satisfaction, he took up a position by the mantel-shelf, where he made a dumb show with his right hand, as if jerking out the flowers.

With his left hand he at the same moment reached behind him on the mantel-shelf, and took up an antique clock, which he transferred to his pocket, the scattering of the flowers and the disappearance of the clock being timed to take place together.

So neatly was the clock transferred to

his capacious tail-pocket, and so completely did his long bony hand conceal the article, that unless a person had been behind him at the time, it would have been impossible to have witnessed the act of transference.

Just as Brown had got the clock in his pocket, and before he had time to return it to the mantel-shelf, a servant entered the room to tell him that her mistress would see him in the library.

So sudden was her entrance—and the Doctor had been too engrossed in the "manifestation" he was arranging, to hear the faint knock she gave—that he gave a start of surprise when he heard her speak.

It was not often that Brown was taken off his guard or caught napping; and had the servant been a shrewder observer, she would have noticed his confusion.

His confusion, however, was but momentary, and when the girl repeated her message—which she thought he had not heard—he had completely recovered his self-possession.

He turned and faced the girl, looking at her with a vacant stare.

He did not speak; and it was the servant's turn to get confused.

"What a queer man," she said to herself.

"Just the kind of girl to make an impression on," thought the doctor; and he commenced pacing up and down the room, throwing his hands about the while.

"I wonder what he's about?" thought the servant. "Is he mad, or what?" And she drew back a pace, watching him, however, open-eyed.

"Aren't you well, sir?" she eventually stammered out.

"Well?" replied Brown, after a pause, in sepulchral tones. "I'm as well as the spirits will let me be."

At this, the girl drew still further back; and she would probably have made a bolt for it, if the Doctor's movements hadn't a sort of fascination for her.

"He's in spirits," she muttered faintly. "I can smell 'em from here," and she felt for her pocket-handkerchief.

"I feel 'em," groaned Brown, pressing his hands upon his forehead and his stomach, pausing now and then to wave his arms wildly in the air. "They are about me, above me, beneath me, inside me, outside me, all over me." And he made the most horrible grimaces.

"He's got 'em bad, regular jim-jams—the wretch," said the girl, trembling against the door-post.

"Do you not feel the influence?" asked the Doctor, approaching her with a fixed stare.

"Influence, indeed, you horrid man; it's you who are under the influence. Don't you come near me, or I'll scream," and the girl put out her hands as if to keep him back.

"I am under the control of the spirits," said the Doctor in solemn tones, moving still nearer.

"I'm sure he has no control over himself," thought the girl; "what if he should attack me?" And her knees shook, whilst her heart went pit-a-pat with fear.

The girl's alarm seemed to amuse the Doctor, and a cold, wintry smile played upon his lips.

"A deuced pretty girl," said the Doctor to himself, watching the shrinking form with satisfaction behind his spectacles. Brown had a keen eye for beauty, and thought himself quite a lady-killer; and, in spite of his great spirituality, was by no means above a little mundane flirtation.

He was by this time right in front of the girl, whose hand he (in a spiritual way, of course) took hold of.

With the touch of his hand, the girl

gave a loud shriek, which echoed through the house.

In an instant every one was astir, and steps were heard coming along the passage.

Mrs. Parkinson was the first to enter the room, followed by her daughter and Alston, to find the girl Sarah in a fainting condition on a chair, and the Doctor standing calmly in the middle of the room.

"Why, what is this?" asked Mrs. Parkinson, in surprise.

"Doctor! Sarah! What does it mean!"

"Oh that horrid man," replied Sarah, with a shudder.

"What do you mean? Explain yourself," said Mrs. Parkinson.

"Oh, m'm," said the girl, plucking up courage, "he isn't quite right. I do believe" (and she sank her voice to a whisper) "that he's in spirits."

"In spirits?" asked her mistress. "Do you mean that he is under spiritual control?"

"Yes, m'm, brandy or whisky, or something of the kind. I never see such goings on. First he dashed about the room making awful noises, and then he tried to catch hold of my hand. But I ain't that sort of girl (this with a toss of

her head), and I pretty soon let him know it. That was why I screamed, for to tell you the truth, m'm, I didn't know what he mightn't be up to," and Sarah cast an indignant look at the immovable Brown.

So still was the Doctor, that one might have imagined him to be hewn out of wood. He neither spoke nor moved a muscle of his body, and his face had assumed an ecstatic expression.

"I wonder what the medium has got to say to this?" said Alston in a side tone to Violet.

"I wonder?" echoed Violet. "But how strange he looks. He hasn't spoken once since we came in, and there is such a queer expression on his face."

"Shall I rouse him up?" asked Alston.

"Oh, no, don't touch him," replied the young girl. "See, mother is going to him!"

At this point Mrs. Parkinson strode across the room to where Brown stood, and looked at him closely.

"Why," she exclaimed in tones of the deepest concern, "the Doctor is in a trance."

The Doctor remained motionless.

"Do not come too near," added Mrs. Parkinson, waving back her daughter and Alston, "or your magnetism may have an

injurious effect upon him. Let me demagnetize him first."

She made several passes in front of the medium's face, and he, after giving one or two convulsive shudders, slowly opened his eyes, which were not shaded by his spectacles.

"Dear me," he said, gazing round the room with a vacant stare. "Where am I? Oh, here! I have been in a trance, and have had a most extraordinary vision."

"Yes?" ejaculated Mrs. Parkinson.

"I saw coming down from the spheres a band of spirits headed by a form that seemed familiar to me; yet I found that I knew it not. It seemed to enter this house—this very room, and then pass away into space."

"My husband," broke in Mrs. Parkinson. "It was his form you saw. He is now in his one hundred and thirty-ninth sphere, and able to manifest through a powerful medium. Ah, doctor, this is good news you tell me."

"But the rest, my dear madam, is not so pleasant. On the arrival of your husband's form, a cloud came over the scene; and presently from out of the darkness came a band of evil spirits. They sought to drive him off, but he battled with them, and—"

"Yes, doctor," eagerly added Mrs. Parkinson.

"I cannot tell you any more," added Brown; "for at that point you awoke me."

"This is a queer go," said the servant Sarah, as, with a toss of the head, she bounced out of the room, whilst Alston viewed the medium with undisguised contempt.

"How unfortunate," said Mrs. Parkinson. "How very unfortunate; but, Doctor, you will be able to tell us more when the sitting takes place."

"Good always conquers evil, madam," replied Brown sententiously; "and the spirits of light will, fear not, drive away the spirits of darkness. But with a sitting, much, as you will know, depends upon the conditions which surround it. You have, I presume, no sceptics here?" and the Doctor eyed Alston suspiciously through his spectacles, which he had resumed.

Brown was a good judge of character, and he saw at a glance that the young surgeon had nothing of the "true believer" look about him. And he invented the story of the evil spirits in case he found it necessary to have him or any other sceptic prohibited from attending the "materialization séance."

"Sceptics? Oh dear no!" quickly answered Mrs. Parkinson. My daughter —allow me to present you to her, Dr. Brown,—is a believer: and this gentleman, Mr. Alston, is—well, I can't exactly say a believer, but he has just assured me that he is most anxious to be convinced of the realities of spiritualism. I hope, Doctor, you will be able to convince him."

"I hope so too," replied Brown, somewhat dubiously; for he had no great faith in Alston's desire to be convinced.

"Believe me," was Alston's reply, "I am most willing to be convinced; and if you can prove to me that there is anything in spiritualism, I shall be only too ready to acknowledge it."

"Well said, Mr. Alston!" broke in Mrs. Parkinson, in a cheerful voice, "we shall have you a believer yet."

At this Alston gave Violet a look full of meaning.

"You see, everything is favourable, Dr. Brown," continued the good lady; "and to-night's séance ought to be a great success. But, Doctor, don't you think you could give us a little something now?"

Brown, who was itching for the opportunity to produce this "little something," shook his head somewhat doubtfully.

"Everything," he said, "depends upon conditions. I cannot command the spirits to appear, neither can I induce them to manifest if they are not so disposed. If my controls and myself are *en rapport* this afternoon, we may possibly get something. I cannot, however, guarantee anything. We can only sit, and see what will come."

"But, Doctor," said Alston, "ought not your controls to give you notice of their coming? For the manifestations, from all I can learn, are exceedingly exhausting to the mediums; and it seems to me but fair that they should let a medium have an opportunity of knowing when he may expect them."

"We mediums are but instruments in the hands of the spirits," replied Brown, very humbly. "We cannot dictate to them what they should do. They choose their mediums through whom communication is to be made to this world, and they control as they think fit."

"Quite so," joined in Mrs. Parkinson. "*I* know what it is to be mediumistic. We cannot analyze a spirit's motives, Mr. Alston, in the same way that you can dissect a body. You may depend upon it, that what a spirit does, it does for the best."

"I hope so," replied Alston, and said no more.

"Well, Doctor, shall we commence to sit?" asked Mrs. Parkinson.

"If you will, madam; but of course we must not feel disappointed if nothing happens," replied Brown, who was secretly rejoiced at thus having an opportunity of carrying out the little trick which he had already prepared, and which, being certain of success, would make an excellent impression.

Brown was a firm believer in first impressions.

As Brown was arranging the chairs in the background, a couple of visitors were announced. They were a young married couple named Drummond. Mrs. Drummond was a firm believer in Spiritualism, but her husband was neither a believer nor a disbeliever. He simply thought the whole thing awfully "queer, don't-cher-know," and, beyond accompanying his wife to the various séances she attended, had given the subject but very little consideration.

Mrs. Drummond, who had a mania for such things, was delighted at the idea of having arrived in time to take part in the séance.

"I am so glad to have the opportunity

of seeing you again, Dr. Brown," she said, extending to the medium an exquisitely gloved hand.

Mrs. Drummond was pretty, and Brown —in a spiritual way, of course,—did not fail to squeeze it.

"I do hope," she continued, "you will be able to control that dear little baby spirit this afternoon—the one that appeared at Mrs. Fitz-James's séance last Wednesday. How sweetly he rapped! I quite longed to embrace the dear little thing."

The Doctor bowed, whilst the cold, wintry smile came upon his lips. For the "dear little thing," to whose rapping Mrs. Drummond referred, was simply his big toe. That was the "spirit" which produced the raps; and the Doctor was sufficiently human to wish that pretty Mrs. Drummond would embrace him instead of his big toe.

"That was a very good show, old chap, you gave that evening; quite beyond me, I can assure you," said Drummond, patting Brown on the back.

"A show, Mr. Drummond?" indignantly exclaimed Mrs. Parkinson. "A show! what do you mean?"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Parkinson, I'm sure," humbly replied the young man;

"but 'pon my honour, I quite forget what the correct word is."

"Manifestation," was the stern reply. "To manifest—to become apparent;" and the outraged lady checked the words off on her fingers with marked deliberation.

Drummond once more made his apologies, and promised to remember it in future, and Mrs. Parkinson was satisfied.

The seating was then arranged. Brown took good care to place himself in shadow, whilst the "sitters" had the afternoon sun in their eyes. He also so arranged it, that he could readily handle the silk to which the spray of flowers was attached.

After a time, there came a shower of raps, apparently from all parts of the room, much to the delight of Mrs. Parkinson.

Then Brown went into a trance, and the rapping which had considerably puzzled Alston, suddenly ceased.

"Hush," said Mrs. Parkinson, gazing ecstatically towards the ceiling; "the spirits are here."

Presently the medium spoke.

"I see a spirit—a child—a little girl with bright yellow hair, and soft blue eyes. It comes through the window and pauses in the middle of the room. It is searching

for some one. Now it moves towards Mrs. Drummond and stands in front of her."

"My little sister," exclaimed Mrs. Drummond with a sob. "Ettie, darling," and she held out her arms as if to take the "spirit" to her.

It was with difficulty that Alston could restrain himself whilst this cruel farce was being played; and had it not been for his promise to Violet, he would no doubt have jumped up from his seat and soundly kicked the spirit-seeing medium.

"Now the little child is gone," continued Brown, "and there comes towards the circle a middle-aged man. He is short and dark, like one who has lived in Eastern lands. He does not appear to be happy, and his face betrays considerable anxiety. He looks as if he were seeking for some one. Ah! he pauses behind Mr. Drummond's chair. He would talk with him, but he seems powerless to speak."

"Why, that's the governor," said Drummond. "He comes to me almost every séance I attend; but what he wants with me I can't for the life of me make out. If he would only say what he wanted, it would be much more satisfactory. Perhaps his liver is out of order, and he comes to tell me that he isn't any

more comfortable as a spirit than he was when alive."

"What rubbish all this is," said Alston in an aside to Violet. "How I long to kick that smug-faced rascal!"

"Be quiet, Jack; you know your promise," whispered Violet; and with a grumble, Alston assented.

After a pause, Brown announced that the spirit of Drummond's "governor" had taken his departure, and a new character, according to the medium, was about to put in an appearance.

"All is now a blank," said Brown. "The blackness of night obscures my vision;" and he pressed his hands upon his forehead. "Now a ray of light pierces the darkness," he continued, "and I can see dimly in the distance a chaos of moving forms." . . . Here he paused.

"Now a form separates from the rest and moves towards the earth. It is that of an old man with a white beard—it is he whom I saw to-day. But he is now alone, the attendant shadows are absent—No!"

And an expression of well-assumed horror took possession of the medium's face.

"Evil spirits pursue him—they gain upon him; they clutch him. Now all is darkness again."

"My husband," faintly exclaimed Mrs. Parkinson; and with a look of the deepest anxiety, she watched the face of the Doctor, who seemed to be gazing vacantly into space.

Presently there came upon the stillness a gentle *tap, tap, tap,* as if some one were knocking at the door.

At this the Doctor started; for as he had not himself produced the raps, he felt that some one was playing a prank.

Not so Mrs. Parkinson—who fancied every knock she heard to be the outcome of spirit power—who at once came to the conclusion that it was her husband knocking.

"It is *his* knock," she exclaimed joyfully. "It is just as *he* tapped at the door when he came home late from his club."

The tapping was again heard, and this time it seemed as if the spirit or human being who was causing it, was growing impatient.

"Just like him to get impatient before one has time to get to the door," thought Mrs. Parkinson; whilst Brown wondered who it could be who was taking such unwarrantable liberties.

The Doctor's doubts were speedily set at rest by the door slowly opening and the servant Sarah putting her head into the room.

"I beg pardon, m'm," she said, when she saw the position of affairs.

"Well, what do you want?" asked her mistress, sharply. For she was much annoyed to think that what she had taken for her husband's knock, was simply that of her parlour-maid.

"I beg pardon, ma'am; but I've come for the clock."

At the mention of the word clock, the Doctor smiled grimly. "This is fortunate," he said to himself. "Presently there will be a hue and cry after it; and whilst they are searching for it, I can replace it in its position." And although he was exceedingly annoyed at the appearance of the girl at the precise moment when he was going to work the flower "phenomenon," he inwardly thanked her for thus unconsciously playing into his hands. Dr. Brown's was not a grateful nature; but he would, I believe, have kissed the girl—especially as she was not at all bad-looking—out of sheer gratitude.

"Oh, never mind the clock, Sarah," said Mrs. Parkinson. "You can go," she continued, seeing that the maid remained where she was; "your presence disturbs the sitting."

"But, m'm," whispered the girl in a

loud aside, as she drew close to her mistress's chair, "what will you do? for you know, m'm, you can't wake without it."

"Let it be, Sarah; I shall not take a nap this evening before dinner," replied Mrs. Parkinson, in an undertone.

"Bless me," almost shrieked the girl, whose eyes had been searching the mantelshelf; "if that alarm-clock hain't been and gone."

At the word alarm-clock, the heart of the medium sank.

"What if it should go off in my pocket," he thought; and a feeling like having a stream of ice-water running down his back came over him. But he took courage a little when he thought that the alarm-signal might not only be unset, but that if set, some time would elapse before it could go off. Then he remembered that it was not going when he picked it up, and his spirits resumed their previous buoyancy.

"I'll create a diversion," he inwardly added, "and get rid of the —— thing."

But on looking round the room, he saw the eyes of Alston fixed intently on him.

This made him nervous again; and he fervently wished he had left the "—— thing" alone.

"It is most mysterious where that there

clock can have got to," added the girl. "I only set it a hour ago; and I vow I put it back in its place again, after I wound it up."

"The devil," said Brown to himself. "It's set, and may go off at any moment;" and once more he felt the douche of ice-cold water down his spine.

He moved about uncomfortably; and never, perhaps, did a man more earnestly wish that he could drop through the floor, clock and all.

How he cursed that clock, which now seemed to be like a living thing, anxious to disclose its whereabouts!

In his nervousness he fancied he heard it tick; and with each tick his nerves gave a jump. No dynamiter carrying an infernal machine likely to go off at any moment could have felt more fearful. And the fact that Alston seemed to watch him so closely, naturally added to his fears. Look which way he would, the young surgeon's eyes appeared to follow him.

Unconsciously, almost, he put his hands behind him, and clutched his coat-tails as if to deaden the sound of the solemn tick! tick! tick! which echoed like a funeral bell in his ears.

It was a positive relief when Mrs. Parkinson spoke.

"Are you certain, Sarah, you left it on the mantel-shelf?" she said.

"Certain, m'm? I'm positive," and Sarah looked the picture of positiveness.

"Then," added her mistress, "an evil spirit must have taken it. Doctor, what do you think?"

The Doctor came back to himself with a start. And he was sensibly relieved when he discovered that the ticking of the clock existed only in his over-wrought imagination.

"What do I think, madam? Well, to tell the truth, I hardly know what to think. Evil spirits do creep into circles; and it is just possible that the clock has been taken in that way," and the worthy medium, having thus delivered himself, glanced gravely round the room, as if he were searching for the delinquent.

"Where do they take such things to—to their uncles?" asked Alston sarcastically. "Or haven't these larcenous spirits accommodating relatives who will take their spoils off their hands?"

"Such levity, Mr. Alston," interposed Mrs. Parkinson, "is most unbecoming; and it is with regret that I hear you so far forget yourself." And the good lady eyed him severely, whilst over Brown's

face there came a look of the deepest compassion.

"Dr. Brown is so forgiving," would say the Spiritualists. "He is ever ready to return good for evil; and his heart bleeds for those who do not believe."

This time, however, "Dr." Brown's heart did not bleed, and if a clairvoyante could have looked into his heart at that moment, she would have seen that the feeling it harboured towards Alston was anything but a charitable one. In fact in his heart the Doctor wished him at a place where he himself will probably go to sooner or later.

"We will resume the sitting," said Mrs. Parkinson, "and, Sarah, you can go."

"This is a rum affair," said Sarah to herself as she left the room, "who ever heard of spirits taking clocks before? What with this knocking all over the house, and these dark séances, this 'ouse is becoming unbearable; and if it wasn't for Miss Violet, I wouldn't stop in it another day. No, that I wouldn't," and Sarah went downstairs to unburden her troubled mind to the cook, who, being a believer in Spiritualism, told her to mind her own business.

So far luck had been with Brown; but it forsook him at the last moment.

Just as he was in the act of removing the clock, whilst the "sitters" were resuming their old positions, he felt it vibrate to his touch. He started as if stung; for there was no mistake about its ticking this time.

"The spirits are returning with the clock," cried Mrs. Drummond. "Do you not hear it ticking?"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Parkinson. "Let us see what will happen."

And in the dead silence which followed the ticking of the clock could be distinctly heard. The perspiration stood on the medium's brow, and his legs seemed to bend and give way. "Oh, Lord!" he muttered, as a whirring sound struck his ear, "it's going off."

And go off it did.

The misery of the medium was a sight to behold. He looked first this way, and then that. He clutched his coat-tails with frantic haste, and pushed them between his legs in order to deaden the sound, finally sinking into an armchair close by in sheer despair.

At this moment Alston sprang from his seat and seized the Doctor by the collar of his coat. Lifting him up by his right hand, he drew forth the clock—which was still ringing merrily—with his left.

"Here is the clock, Mrs. Parkinson," said Alston, holding it up in triumph. "And here is the 'evil spirit,'" and he shook the medium with considerable vigour.

"Take your hand away," gasped Brown, "You are choking me."

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" exclaimed Mrs. Parkinson, her face firing with indignation. "How dare you lay your hands on this gentleman—my guest?" and she removed Alston's hand from Brown's throat.

"It means this," replied Alston bluntly, "that this gentleman"—with an emphasis on the gentleman—"is a trickster; I might even say a thief. He comes here to give you what he calls a séance, for which I presume he gets handsomely paid. He begins with a lot of rubbishing talk about 'spirit forms,' and ends with pocketing your clock. This sort of thing may be in strict accordance with Spiritualistic practices, but it is a most dishonest proceeding all the same."

"Sir!" Mrs. Parkinson's face was a study as she, boiling over with indignation, addressed the young surgeon. "How dare you use such language about this gentleman! The affair, I have no doubt, can readily be explained; and you have

no right to prejudge any one in this way. Come, tell us, Doctor," and she turned to the quaking medium, "how it has come about."

"I can only say, madam, that I had no idea of its being in my pocket; on my word of honour I had not;" and Brown looked the picture of injured innocence.

"I believe you, Doctor," earnestly replied Mrs. Parkinson; "and I have no doubt that an evil spirit put the clock in your pocket."

"That is so, madam," said Brown. "I have felt the presence of evil influences ever since I came here; and one of the spirits of darkness must have put the clock in my pocket when I was in a trance and unconscious of what was going on."

"You hear that?" said Mrs. Parkinson, turning to Alston.

"Oh yes, but all the same I do not believe what he says," was the sturdy reply. "I am convinced that he put the clock into his pocket himself, and that no spirit either good, bad, or indifferent, had a hand in it. It is possible that the fellow had no intention of stealing the thing, but he doubtless intended to play some juggler's trick with it, in order to impose upon you."

"I won't believe your libels," said Mrs.

Parkinson. "Dr. Brown is a medium of irreproachable character, and it is your prejudice against Spiritualism that causes you to say such brutal things about him; and I must request you to apologize to Dr. Brown for your unjustifiable assault upon him and your equally unjustifiable language towards him."

"Which," rejoined Alston, "I must emphatically decline to do."

"Then," sternly added Mrs. Parkinson, "I must request you to leave my house at once."

"Mother!" and Violet was at her mother's side in a moment.

Mrs. Parkinson refused, however, to listen to her, and the poor girl was much upset at the unexpected turn affairs had taken.

As for Alston, he felt supremely indignant. He had, he argued to himself, but done his duty in unmasking this impostor; and he considered he deserved Mrs. Parkinson's thanks instead of her condemnation for the part he had taken. But he had overlooked the fact that Spiritualistically inclined folk are not like other mortals; and when he promised Violet to observe the conditions, and do nothing to prevent the production of the so-called manifestations, he had reserved

to himself the right to expose the medium if caught in the act of cheating. In such case, he thought, Mrs. Parkinson's belief in Spiritualism would be shattered, and he would be doing her a good service. But, sanguine man, he had not reckoned with the "evil-spirit" theory, and he was not aware that your thorough-going Spiritualist refuses to accept a common-sense explanation of anything appertaining to Spiritualism, and bitterly resents any attempt to convert him from the error of his ways.

Mrs. Parkinson was no exception to the rule; and in the moment of her anger, she positively hated the young man for the part he had taken.

When she told him to leave her house, Alston bowed; and, although he was beside himself with disgust and indignation, he admirably kept his temper.

"Madam," he said, "I wish you good-day; and as for you, sir," he added, turning to Brown with a look that made that individual shiver with fear, "our reckoning will come later."

"Good-bye, Vi," and his hand grasped hers in farewell. "I will write to-night. Good-bye, dear." And before she could stay him, he was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

BETWEEN THE ACTS.

THINGS were all sixes and sevens at Parkhurst.

Mrs. Parkinson had strictly forbidden her daughter to either see or correspond with Alston, and declined to listen to anything that she might have to say in his favour.

Brown, whose nerves had been too much shaken to try the materializing business after Alston had departed, had installed himself at Parkhurst. He had become very confidential with the widow, who paid him great deference.

He never lost an opportunity of pouring oil on the flames; and eventually Mrs. Parkinson looked upon the Doctor in the light of a martyr, and the young surgeon as a criminal of the worst character.

"He might have killed me," said the medium to the sympathizing Mrs. Parkinson, with a sigh; "for when one is entranced, a sudden shock to the system is frequently attended with fatal results."[1]

[1] The Spiritualists always assert that any attack upon a "manifesting spirit," is calculated to endanger

"What an awful thing!" replied the widow. "Why, the man might have been a murderer; and to think that such a man should wish to marry my daughter."

"Do not be too hard upon him," was Brown's crafty reply. "I don't suppose for a moment that he wished to do me any severe bodily injury; it was simply the act of an unthinking sceptic."

"You are too generous, too forgiving," and the widow had warmly shaken him by the hand, in appreciation of his generosity.

Brown avowed that he only wished to be just, and that sceptics were in reality much to be pitied; for not only did they walk in darkness all the days of their life, but they ran the risk of being eternally doomed in the world beyond.

Mrs. Parkinson and Brown had many a "nice, quiet, little séance" together; but for reasons best known to himself, he put off from day to day the proposed "materialization" of the alderman.

"The influences are against us at present," he told Mrs. Parkinson, when she asked when the séance would take place.

the life of the medium; but experience has shown that the medium receives precisely the same punishment that is administered to the "spirit" he raises—and no more.—S. C.

"My controls strongly advise a postponement, and if we attempt a materialization just now, the result, I am assured, would not be satisfactory."

Mrs. Parkinson believed him, and was content.

In the course of the nice, quiet, little séances aforesaid—in which Violet positively refused to take part—Brown did some remarkable things, and Mrs. Parkinson was more impressed than ever with the power and genuineness of his mediumship.

He caused the table to rap out messages from the deceased alderman, and produced slate-writing by the yard, and on one occasion, he actually floated round the room, leaving a proof of his having done so—for the floating of course was done in the dark—in the shape of his signature scrawled in tremulous characters on the ceiling.[2]

Violet, for her part, cordially detested the Doctor; and it was with the greatest difficulty that she could address him with even modified politeness. She felt that he hated her in return, although he was always studiously polite to her, and that he was capable of any meanness in widen-

[2] This writing was, I presume, done with a soft-leaded pencil firmly fixed in a telescopic rod.—S. C.

ing the existing breach between her mother and herself.

Although her mother had forbidden her to correspond with her lover, she had refused to obey; and they kept up an almost daily correspondence. She had not, however, as yet been able to see him. For he would not come to the house again after what had happened, and she was not permitted to go out alone.

For a high-spirited young girl of twenty, her position was a most unenviable one. Violet had no wish to disobey her mother; but at the same time she wished to be just to her lover.

She had promised to be his wife, and she meant to keep her promise in spite of all. He had done nothing wrong, nothing to forfeit her love; and her mother's animosity towards him simply tended to strengthen her affection for him.

He wrote, and she answered his letters.

There was no secrecy about it; and although Mrs. Parkinson did not see every letter that came, or every one that was sent in reply, she was aware that a correspondence was being kept up between her daughter and Alston.

She had forbidden such a correspondence; but what was she to do? The

age of shutting up one's daughter in her bedroom till such time as she should become subservient to one's wishes is past, and your latter-day miss has a will of her own that appears to have been unknown in the good old days of parental authority. Then the stern parent seemed to have it all his own way, and in the end the errant child was forced to submit. But now the tables are turned, and it is the parent who gives in—the girl who holds out long enough being practically certain of eventually getting her own way.

No girl can be forced to do anything against her will nowadays. She may give up her lover out of deference to her parent's wishes, or be persuaded into marrying a man of her parent's choosing, but she cannot be forced into it. And when I read in novels or hear in real life of such and such a girl being forced to give up the man of her choice, in order to marry some one who has been selected for her, I have no patience with such nonsense; for the girl has either been a weak, wishy-washy sort of creature who could have been persuaded into marrying any one, and whom any true man would be well rid of, or she has been actuated by worldly motives, in which parental authority has played but a small part.

The course of true love probably runs no smoother now than it did in mediæval times; but young lovers of to-day have a far better chance of cementing their affection at the altar, in spite of the opposition of their respective parents, than they had in those days, or even fifty years ago.

Nineteenth-century parents may storm and command, and even threaten all sorts of dire things if their daughter elects to bestow her affections upon some one who is not acceptable to them; but beyond making things extremely uncomfortable for her whilst she remains with them, they can do but little to prevent a girl who is loyal and true to the man of her heart from marrying him.

Love, which in the middle ages mocked at stone walls and iron bars, laughs equally freely at the latter-day parents' milder forms of repression; and a true woman will never be coerced nor persuaded into abandoning the one to whom she has plighted her troth, and whom she believes to be worthy of her.

Violet was a true woman, and she was determined to marry Alston. She had also a high sense of duty, and it hurt her to do anything that displeased her mother. But in this case she felt her mother to be entirely in the wrong, and

she was almost tempted to yield to her lover's request to marry him and end the suspense. But she resisted the temptation. Firstly, because she did not despair of ultimately gaining her mother's consent; and, secondly, because she did not see the wisdom of marrying upon nothing and forfeiting everything she would otherwise receive under her father's will. Violet was a sensible girl, and like all sensible girls, was not without a touch of worldliness. She did not believe in love in a cottage, and she knew how injudicious it would be for them to marry practically upon nothing. And whilst her lover was impatient, she was patient, and where he was weak, she was strong.

"It cannot be, dearest," she had written in answer to his impatient appeals to marry him at once. "You must wait —you must be patient. You know that I love you; and that I have promised to marry you. Is this not enough? Mother cannot always be so bitter towards you; and all must come right in the end.

"She is wrong, I know, dear, but you must bear with her; and if you write any more unkind things about her, I will not read them; indeed I won't.

"There is no reason why we should not wait. We are both young; and why there-

fore this haste? I can see you frown at this; but believe me, my love, I am acting for the best. Do not think me cold; for I do love you, oh, so much! But I do not want to do anything that is rash—anything we might live to regret.

"I also love my mother. She has been everything to me since my father died, and I owe her some obedience. It goes hard to disobey her; and this, in writing to you, I am forced to do. She is very angry about it, and every time the postman brings a letter from you, she says the correspondence must cease. I tell her it cannot be; for what, Jack, should I do without your dear letters? They, now you are no longer by, are everything to me. How anxiously I watch the postman turn the corner of the lane; and when he passes by our gates, or calls without bringing a letter from you, it is a sad moment for me.

"You ask me if you are to wait for ever. No, not quite for ever, dear. But say for a year. In another year I shall be of age, when I can do as I like. It is true that I am not expected to marry without my mother's consent before I am twenty-five; but, dear, I won't ask you to wait as long as that.

"You can wait a year, dear; it isn't long; and if by then mother still refuses

her consent, I will no longer say you no.

"You will write to me soon? And don't forget to say how you are. You tell me nothing of yourself. I am well, dearest—very well; and mother is not unkind to me.

"Believe me to be ever your own,

"VIOLET."

"P.S.—That horrid man Brown is still here. Mother is very thick with him, and seems to place implicit confidence in him. He has not attempted any 'materialization' yet; but he and mother have a 'sitting' together every evening. I know it is wrong to say so, but I hate that man, and I feel that he hates me, and would not hesitate to do me an injury if he could. But don't vex yourself about him, Jack; he isn't worth it."

When Alston received this letter, he, like all young men who are very much in love, read it over twice and kissed it several times. The P.S. vexed him exceedingly; and when he had finished reading it, he brought his clenched fist down upon a table by his side in a manner that would have made the medium tremble in his shoes had he been by.

Having metaphorically punched Brown's head a hundred times, and utterly demolished him over and over again, he

composed himself sufficiently to write to Violet; and this was his letter :—

"DEAREST,—It is very good of you to write so soon. You cannot tell how welcome your letters are. It seems ages, although it is not quite a fortnight ago, since we last met. A fortnight ago! Ah, me. What a lot has happened since then. Who would have thought a fortnight ago that we should be separated like this?

"I have no wish, my darling, to say anything harsh about your mother; and I beg of you to pardon me if anything I have said appeared to be unkind. But it is indeed hard that we should be the victims of your mother's superstitions. But as you say, dearest, all will—all must come right in the end. I will be patient; and will wait and work until the time comes when you shall be my own little wife. A year is a long time to wait when one loves as I do, and when one knows what you have to put up with in the meantime. It grieves me, my darling, that I cannot take you away from all this humbug and cruel deception; but, thank Heaven, there is no fear of your being tainted with this Spiritualistic disease. I will be even with this medium yet, and no Shylock shall be more unrelenting when the settling day comes, than I.

"I am afraid, dear, this rascal may get your mother into his clutches, and fleece her of all he can; and although she may not listen to you if you seek to put her on her guard against him, you will do well to keep your eye upon him and advise your mother of his doings.

"He is, I firmly believe, a great scoundrel, and will stop at nothing. It makes one's blood boil to know that one cannot be by you and protect you against this fellow's scoundrelism. But after what has happened, I cannot, of course, come to your mother's house again, unless she bids me. Then, and then alone, will I come. Believe me, I bear her no ill-will; although in the first moment I found it hard to forget, and harder still to forgive the indignity put upon me. But now, thanks to you, my dear one, I have learnt to look at it in a different light; and although I am grieved beyond measure that she should be a believer in this craze, called Spiritualism, I think with you, that she is rather to be pitied than condemned.

"Time, which will bring us together, will, I trust, work its cure with her.

"Now good-bye, darling, and God bless you. You will write soon?

"Ever your own,

"JACK."

When the postman brought this letter,

Violet was in the hall, and she eagerly took—I might almost say snatched—it out of the servant's hand.

This her mother saw, and she once more remonstrated with her upon the impropriety of keeping up a correspondence with a man she was determined should not be her husband.

"The way in which you flaunt that fellow's letters in front of me and write your replies to him under my very nose," added her mother with much warmth, "is perfectly disgraceful, knowing, as you do, my feelings upon the subject."

"Would you have me do by stealth, what I am proud to do openly?" replied Violet. "No, mother, I am not ashamed of what I do. This is where I live, and here Mr. Alston addresses his letters as he has always done. As long as I live with you, mother, you will find that everything I do will be open and above-board."

With this parting shot, Violet retired with much dignity to her room, where she eagerly read Jack's letter.

Mrs. Parkinson confided her troubles on the subject to Brown.

"Leave it to me, madam," said the medium, with a meaning smile; and Mrs. Parkinson left it to him.

CHAPTER VII.

ALSTON RECEIVES AN OFFER.

About the time that Brown undertook to regulate the correspondence between Alston and Violet, Alston was sitting in the smoking-room of his club ostensibly perusing an evening newspaper, but in reality, drawing fancy pictures of the one he loved, when a hand of some one standing behind, brought down sharply upon his shoulder awoke him from his reverie.

Turning round, he saw a *confrère* of his —Dr. Watson.

"What were you dreaming about, Alston?" asked his friend in cheery tones. "You looked as far gone as a trance medium."

"Dreaming, my dear fellow?" answered Alston in the most unconcerned tone he could assume, "why, I was reading the evening newspaper."

"That's all very well," replied Watson, with a laugh; "but you don't deceive me. I have been through this sort of thing myself."

At this, Alston laughed. "But what brings you here this evening?" he said. "I thought when you became an engaged

man, you had given up the evils of club life, at least for the present." (This with a sly look at Watson.)

"What brings me here? Why you. I called at your diggings in Berkeley Street, and was told you were here. I have something important to tell you."

"Yes."

"Well, you are a cool card, Alston, and no mistake. Here I have been rushing all over the place to find you, and tell you something which may be of importance to you, and it excites no more interest in you than if I had offered you a cigarette."

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you," replied Alston, with a smile; "but you can't expect me to excite myself over a matter of which I, at the present moment, know nothing. What is it?"

"Well, what do you say to going abroad?"

"That depends upon for how long, and where to."

"Say for a year, on a trip round the world."

"For a year, on a trip round the world?" repeated Alston, slowly, to himself, "why nothing would at the present moment suit me better," he added, aloud. "But what is it you are referring to?"

"You have heard of my uncle, Henry

Watson, the 'Copper King'?" said his friend.

"Who hasn't?"

"Well, he's about to take a trip on his yacht round the world. He is out of sorts, and thinks such a trip will set him up. He wants a physician to travel with him, and he asked me to accept the post. But, much as I should have liked to have gone on such a trip, I have been obliged to refuse, for, as you know, I am to be married next week. I, however, thought that you might be disposed to go with him; and this is what I have come to you about."

"It is awfully good of you, Watson," said Alston warmly; "but why should your marriage prevent your going? I should have thought it would have been a capital way of spending a honeymoon. I could look after your patients whilst you were away."

"You don't know my uncle. He is a confirmed bachelor, and wouldn't take a voyage with a woman on board for all the money his mines are worth; and I couldn't put off my marriage for a year to oblige him. I took the liberty of mentioning your name to him, and he asked me to speak to you about it. He is willing to pay a thousand pounds and all expenses;

and you would have a good time with him, for he's excellent company—that is, when he's all right—although somewhat rough. What do you say?"

"I really don't know what to say. I should like it immensely; but—"

"Oh, I am sure *she* wouldn't object. But think it over, and see me in the morning. If you think well of it, I will take you and introduce you to my uncle, who is staying at the Hotel Victoria. But you will have to decide by to-morrow, for he sails on Saturday, and he will, unless you go with him, have to make other arrangements."

"This is very short notice," replied Alston; "it's already Tuesday!"

"I know it; but 'the king' isn't like other people. He is very whimsical, and does many extraordinary things on the impulse of the moment. He has made up his mind to start on Saturday—and start he will. It remains, therefore, with you to say whether you will go with him. I must be off now," added Watson, looking at his watch. "Think it over, and look me up at about ten in the morning;" and, shaking Alston warmly by the hand, he left him.

Alston did think it over, and the more he thought about it, the better he liked the

notion of going. "But what would Violet think about it?" he asked himself over and over again; and each time the answer came in the affirmative. He felt that his sweetheart would offer no serious objection to his going away, and that, so far as her love for him was concerned, she would be true to him if he stayed away not only twelve months, but twelve years. But, on the other hand, would it be right, he thought, to leave her unprotected against the machinations of the rascally medium, who had taken up his abode in her mother's house. For, from what she had said in her last letter, he was convinced that the medium was her enemy.

"But after all," argued Alston, "this rascal will probably take his departure in a few days, for there are doubtless other wealthy geese ready to be plucked besides Mrs. Parkinson. Yes, I will go; for to be so near and yet to be unable to see the one I love, except by stealth, is absolutely unbearable. I will write and explain everything to Violet, and tell her that I mean to accept "his Majesty's offer."

So before going to bed, he wrote a long letter to his love, telling her exactly how matters stood, and bidding her be of good heart.

"I will—I must—see you before I go,

my darling," he added at the close of the letter; "but where? To your mother's house I cannot go. Can you suggest anything?"

This letter he posted himself, in order to be sure that it should reach her in the morning at about the time he would be arranging with the "Copper King." This done, he went to bed; but although generally a good sleeper, he, on this occasion, slept but ill.

His brain was in a constant whirl, idea after idea, without sequence or connection, crowding fast upon each other. At times he dozed, but only to be troubled with incoherent dreams, in which spirits and mediums, stern, unrelenting mothers-in-law, and cold, ghastly fathers-in-law were mixed together in a most bewildering manner.

He arose early, with a splitting headache; and when he went to shave himself, he, for the first time in his life, found his hand shake. At breakfast time he ate but little, and the whole time he seemed to be lost in thought. Punctually at ten he was at his friend's house in Wimpole Street.

"You are not looking well, this morning, Alston," said Watson, when he saw him. "Sitting up late, eh?"

"Not exactly; but I didn't sleep well,

and lying awake plays the very deuce with me," answered Alston carelessly.

"Well, my dear fellow, what have you decided to do?" asked Watson.

"I think I shall accept, although to tell the truth, I have barely had time to think the matter over. Besides, you know, I haven't yet seen your uncle; and there is just the chance of my not suiting him."

"I don't think there will be any difficulty about that," replied his friend. "I am certain he will take to you, and, for your part, I feel equally sure you will like him. But come, and I will introduce you."

Calling a hansom, they jumped in and drove to the Hotel Victoria.

The "Copper King" had a suite of apartments on the first floor, and some people were standing outside his door, whilst in the anteroom adjoining his inner sanctum a crowd had already assembled.

They were a hungry crowd; and to Alston's mind, they resembled a flock of vultures hovering around their prey. There were city men with financial schemes of questionable soundness to propose; artists desirous of getting a commission to paint a picture; Jewish dealers in bric-a-brac; newspaper writers sharpening their

pencils preparatory to putting "the King" through the interviewing rack; two or three seedy-looking individuals anxious to borrow a trifle; a smug representative of a missionary society, book in hand, ready to request a suitable donation on behalf of the funds of his society, which undertook the conversion of the heathen aborigines of the North Pole; and the usual needy hangers-on who seek to fatten upon a rich man.

Elbowing their way into the ante-room with difficulty, Watson and Alston gained the side of "the King's" private secretary, who was literally besieged by the favour-seeking crowd.

"Will you tell my uncle I am here?" said Watson aside to this very important young gentleman.

"Certainly, doctor; but you will have to wait a few minutes, as he is engaged just now on a matter of great importance. I'm sorry I can't offer you and your friend a seat, but, as you see, there is scarcely standing-room—house full in all parts, as a theatrical manager would say." And, with a smile, the secretary disappeared through the door which shut off "the Copper King" from the besiegers.

In five minutes he returned, and beckoned Watson and Alston to follow

him. As they passed into "the King's" sanctum, an expression of disgust passed over the faces of the hangers-on, who were one and all grievously disappointed at seeing the two last to arrive go in ahead of them.

"Who the devil are those two fellows?" said a sharkish-looking individual to a fellow-sponger.

"I don't know," replied his companion; "but I heard the elder of the two ask Simes if his uncle was in; so I suppose he is his nephew."

"His Majesty's relations increase in number every day; and it is perfectly sickening to see how they fasten on to him," growled the first speaker, who had been sponging upon "the King" ever since his arrival in England, and whose only claim to the rich man's consideration was that he had played at marbles with him in his native town some forty years before.

"The Copper King" never turned his back on an old friend, and those who had known him in his poverty, found him in his prosperity altogether unchanged. Needless to say, there were not wanting those who traded upon this previous acquaintance, and Simes, as he opened the "gentle reminders" which every post brought to the hotel, wondered if every

rich man was troubled with so many needy acquaintances.

"The King" was seated at a table, writing, when Watson and Alston entered.

"Hullo, Ned," he said, looking up, "what brings you here? The doctor business, eh?"

"Yes, uncle," replied his nephew. "Allow me to introduce you to my friend Alston, about whom I spoke to you yesterday."

"The King" got up from his seat and warmly grasped Alston's hand.

"Well, young man, what do you say?" and he looked at Alston from beneath his shaggy red eyebrows. The millionaire had a wonderfully penetrating glance, and there was no shrewder judge of character in London than he.

"I think I should like to go with you very much," answered Alston.

"Think! Young men should never think; they should know. I do not think I should like you; I know I should, and my mind is made up if yours is. My nephew has told me all about you and your ability. Not that I want a particularly skilful physician—for there is nothing much the matter with me—so much as an agreeable travelling-companion. I don't know anything worse than being

shut up for any time together on a ship with people who ain't sympathetic. Not that I," he went on, "am a particularly agreeable person to travel with; for as Ned will probably have told you, I am as whimsical as a woman, and with the temper of Old Nick himself at times."

At this moment, Simes entered with a handful of visitors' cards and begging letters of one sort or another. These he handed to his employer, who, asking Alston to excuse him for a moment, hurriedly glanced over them.

"Tell that dead-beat Robinson that I won't give him another penny," he said, turning to Simes. "How much did you tell me he had already had?"

"Two hundred pounds, sir," replied Simes, referring to a bulky ledger containing the names of "the King's" pensioners.

"Two hundred pounds," mused "the King." "That's a bit too big to give a man simply because one played at marbles with him as a boy, and licked him once at school. What do you think?" he added, turning to Alston.

"I have licked a man for less," replied Alston.

"Good. I should judge you knew how to use your fists a bit," said the old gentle-

man, viewing Alston's muscular frame with admiration. Then, addressing Simes, he went through the remaining letters and cards.

"Yes, this looks like a genuine case; keep it over for reference;" and he handed a letter from a struggling artist to his secretary. Others of a like character were also put aside for further inquiry, whilst not a few letters and cards were tossed contemptuously into the waste-paper basket.

"Tell that clerical bagman," he remarked, when he came to the representative of the missionary society's card, "that my tail is not for his salt, and that I decline to give one penny towards providing tracts for the heathen aborigines of the North Pole, or blankets for the converted blacks of the South Sea Islands."

"Why do you bother yourself at all over these folks?" said Dr. Watson. "If I were in your place, I should decline to receive any one who was not properly introduced, and throw every begging letter that came into the waste-paper basket."

"There you are wrong, Ned," replied his uncle. "I make a point of looking into the merits of everything that comes; for amongst the heap of lies and cant, there frequently lies a case of genuine distress;

and if I were to do as you suggest, the really deserving would never be discovered. Now, young man," he added, turning to Alston, "what do you say? You know my terms, and you know me. I must have an answer at once. What is it, yes or no?"

For a moment Alston did not answer. He was thinking of the girl he loved, the girl he would leave behind him; and in that moment his heart sank.

But "the King's" clear voice acted like a tonic upon him.

"Come," he said, "yes or no?"

"Yes," replied Alston; and their hands met.

CHAPTER VIII.

GONE.

Immediately on leaving Mr. Watson, Alston wrote to Violet, informing her of what he had done. He also asked her to arrange a meeting, in order that they might bid each other good-bye.

"I cannot," he concluded, "run down before Friday evening, as I have so much to see to—the time before I start being so very short. I shall leave by the five o'clock train, which will enable me to be at your

place a little before six. But where can we meet? How about the little summer-house at the far end of the shrubbery? There we can meet unseen and undisturbed. It moreover has the advantage of being on neutral ground; for I, at least, will not have to ask your mother for a right of way to get to it.

"Be there, then, my darling, at six. If, however, anything should occur to prevent your meeting me at that time, do not fail to let me know as early as possible when you can see me; for, dearest, I must see you before I go."

Usually Violet replied by return of post, but Friday morning arrived without bringing a letter from her; and his previous note, informing her of the offer that had been made him by the "Copper King," remained unanswered. This perplexed and worried Alston, and, lover-like, he at once concluded that something serious must have befallen Violet. Her silence was certainly inexplicable and sufficient to make a less affectionate man than Alston somewhat anxious.

He tried to find a reason for it, but without avail. It was impossible that both his letters could have gone astray; and it never entered his mind that any one would intercept their correspondence.

Violet had expressed no intention of going away, and yet, if she were at home, how came it that she did not answer his letters? It was more than a week—a long time in a lover's life—since he had last heard from her; and the more he pondered over it, the more anxious he became.

"She must be ill," he thought; and a great fear came over him, lest he should go away without seeing her.

It was with a troubled mind, and a sickness at heart, that he got out of the train at Hayes and walked in the direction of Parkhurst.

It took ordinarily about twenty minutes to walk there; but Alston, in his feverish haste, got over the distance in something like half the time.

The road he took skirted by the front entrance to the house, which was approached by a carriage-drive, and he finally entered a narrow lane which divided Parkhurst from another villa property. At the bottom of this lane, on the Parkhurst side, was a summer-house, completely embowered in shrubs and overhung by a majestic elm. This was the place where Alston had first told Violet of his love, and where his first kiss had been given. It was, therefore, in a measure sacred in his eyes; and he ap-

proached it with mingled feelings of hope and fear.

"What if she should not be there?" said Fear. "What if she be ill, too ill to leave her room—how then?"

"But she will be there," argued Hope, radiant with expectation. "She cannot be away when you are by. No, that is impossible."

Alston clutched a branch of the elm and swung himself on to the bank at the back of the trysting-place.

All was still.

Not a sound came from the garden or the house beyond; and the little summer-house exhibited no sign of life.

It was with a sinking heart that the young man pushed his way through the surrounding shrubs, for the intense stillness awoke all his previous fears.

One glance into the place so dear to them both, was sufficient.

She was not there.

Alston drew a hard breath, and then stood looking into the vacant place as one suddenly struck dumb.

It was all too true, he thought. She was ill, and unable to come, for he was convinced that nothing short of serious illness would prevent her being there. His eye wandered over the shrubs and the

flower-beds to the house, and rested upon the window of her room. The blinds were down, and there was no sign of her whom he sought.

A robin was singing in the laburnum tree to his right, but he heeded it not, neither did he hear a rustling noise amongst the shrubs as of some heavy body moving through them. His whole attention was centred upon the window of that room.

Presently he felt something cold touch his hand, and this aroused him from his reverie. Looking down, he saw Violet's favourite dog Leo, a great tawny creature of the boarhound species.

"What, Leo, you here; but where's your mistress?"

Leo wagged his tail, and licked his questioner's hand by way of reply.

"She can't be far off," thought Alston, his heart beating joyfully at the thought; "for the two are inseparable, and who ever saw Violet in the garden without Leo?"

"Come out of your hiding-place, Vi, dear," he said, raising his voice, "and don't tease me any longer. I have so much to say to you."

He looked hard into the leafy labyrinth around him, but could neither see nor hear anything.

The robin suddenly ceased its note, and

flew to a distant tree, while Leo rested his head gloomily upon his paws.

"Come, get up, Leo, and go and find her."

At this Leo scrambled to his feet, and pricked his ears, his eyes looking in the direction of the station.

"What, gone to London?"

Leo set up a little whine.

"How foolish I am to be so anxious," said Alston to himself. "She has gone to London, and has probably missed her train. She will be sure to come by the next train, and I will wait here quietly till she comes."

With this, he entered the summer-house, and, taking a seat in one of the corners, fell into a deep thought.

He pictured himself journeying across the ocean, touching at this place and that, whilst his sweetheart would remain behind alone and, as it seemed, uncared for. But the days, at least with him, would speedily glide by, and in twelve months he would return to claim her whom he loved; for at the end of a year she would be his wife with or without her mother's consent. And so he mused.

The uneasy movements of the dog at length brought him to himself again. He got up and looked at his watch.

"She should be here by this," he said. "I wonder if there is any sign of her," and he clambered up the bank, and cast his eye down the lane.

No one was in sight.

Presently some one appeared turning the corner of the lane. Was it she? No, it was a man, and that man a police-constable.

Bobby came marching slowly along, casting an eye now and then upon the house.

When almost opposite Alston, whom he could not see for the hanging branches of the elm, he stopped, and putting his head through a gap in the hedge, he gave a peculiar whistle.

"What's his little game?" thought Alston; whilst Bobby, whose signal did not appear to have been heard, repeated it. This time it was not without effect, for footsteps were heard on the gravel path beyond, and the rustle of a woman's dress against the shrubs.

In another moment the form of Sarah, the housemaid, appeared in sight. She was making direct to where Alston stood, and it would be impossible to pass him without seeing him.

"This is interesting," thought Alston, forgetting in the love affairs of Bobby and

Sarah his own anxieties. "I am sorry, however, to have to spoil their *tête-à-tête*, for I can't stay here and play the eavesdropper;" and he jumped down just as Sarah was in front of the summer-house.

The girl started and gave a faint scream, whilst Bobby peered anxiously over the hedge to see what had happened.

"Oh, sir, how you did startle me!" she said. "Who hever thought of seeing you here, sir. Was it you who was whistling, sir?" she added after a pause, during which she had regained her composure.

"I, Sarah!" replied Alston merrily. "Do you think I could whistle like a policeman?"

"Like a policeman, sir, what do you mean?" asked the girl with a well-assumed surprise.

"That's what I mean," replied Alston, pointing to Bobby, whose head appeared above the hawthorn shoots.

"What, sir?" asked Sarah, affecting not to see her lover, whom she, however, with a side-motion signalled to duck his head.

"You are too late, Sarah," said Alston, with a laugh; "there's Bobby's head again;" and with a sudden movement he reached the bank just as the police-

man's head was rising from the other side.

"Well, Bobby," said Alston, as they confronted each other, "what are you doing here?"

For a moment the man was too taken aback to answer; and Alston, although he tried to look as stern as possible, could with difficulty restrain himself from laughing outright at his evident confusion.

"It was just this way, sir," at length replied Bobby, "I thought I 'eard somebody about in the gardens, and knowing as 'ow the ladies was away, I thought I'd see who it was."

"And you whistled, I suppose," added Alston, "in order to let them know you were on the look-out."

"Well not exactly that, sir," replied the policeman, colouring visibly; "but the fact is I am a bit fond of whistling, and I thought as how this young 'ooman, being all alone, might be nervous, and that if she heard me whistle, she'd know that I was on the watch."

"And, you see," said Alston with a smile, "she recognized your whistle and rushed to the arms of her protector; but, Bobby," he added with a touch of seriousness, for he was anxious to get rid of him

before Violet came, "I should advise you to be off before Mrs. Parkinson returns, for, as you are probably aware, no followers are allowed here."

"All right, sir, thank you, sir, you won't mention it, sir?" replied Bobby, preparing to move off. "It's a nice evening, sir; though it looks as if we was going to have a storm. Good evening, sir," and with a sheepish look he retired.

Alston watched him out of sight, and then with a loud laugh he sprang to the ground.

Sarah was still standing there. But all her self-possession had apparently forsaken her, for she looked at Alston with undisguised uneasiness.

"You won't tell of us, sir, will you?" she pleaded. "He's a single man, hindeed he is, and his hintentions is strictly honourable—although cook, as is jealous of me, says spiteful things about 'im—and we are going to be married next Christmas."

"Don't be afraid, Sarah, of course I won't tell," replied Alston assuringly. "But," he added quickly, "where is Miss Violet? Is she quite well?"

"Haven't you 'eard, sir?"

"Heard what?" and an anxious look came in his eyes.

"Why, sir, that they are gone away?"

"Gone away?" And the words were almost shrieked out. "You mean gone to London, don't you?"

"No, sir; gone right away, out of England somewhere."

"Good God, no!" And Alston became as pale as death.

"Yes, sir, they left to-day for some furrin' French place—I forget the name. But surely, sir, you got Miss Violet's letter, telling you all about it?"

"No," replied Alston huskily.

"That's strange, sir, for she gave me the letter to post to you!"

"And you posted it?"

"No, sir, just as I was starting for the post, Mr. Brown—who seems to do just what he likes in the 'ouse—stopped me, and said he was going to the village, and that he would post it for me."

"And you gave it him?" said Alston bitterly.

"Yes, sir; why not?"

"Because," broke in the young man hoarsely, "that man's a scoundrel, and he never posted the letter; and he probably stole the letters that I sent to her."

"Well I never," replied the girl, aghast; "I never liked the man—I won't call 'im a gentleman—but I didn't think as he was

as bad as that. I'd like," she added to herself, "to see 'im stopping my letters to Tom, or Tom's letters to me. I'd scratch his heyes out; that I would."

"Yes," said Alston, "he's bad enough for anything; but can you tell me if Miss Violet has received any letters from me lately? You must know my handwriting by this time."

"I don't think so, sir; at least, I 'aven't seen hany. And I know Miss Violet has looked very disappointed, when she saw that the postman hadn't left hany letters for 'er. And she said to me when she gave me the letter to post, "'Be sure and see that it goes off all right, for one's letters seem to go astray lately.'"

"And you carried out her instructions by giving the letter to that scoundrel?" replied Alston angrily.

"I'm very sorry, sir; but 'ow was I to know?" answered the girl apologetically.

"I cannot blame you," he said sadly; "although much pain might have been saved both of us, if you had acted otherwise. But where has she gone?"

"I can't carry the name of the place in my 'ead," she replied; "but missus left the address in the 'ouse. If you stay 'ere a moment, sir, I will fetch it;" and she ran swiftly towards the house, whilst Alston paced moodily up and down.

In a few moments she returned, holding a slip of paper in her hand.

"'Ere it is, sir," she said, handing him the paper on which the address was written. It ran as follows:

"Hôtel Kron Prinz, Franzensbad, Bohemia."

"All that way off," he muttered despairingly; "and I cannot see her before I go."

"Sarah," he added after a pause, during which a huge lump came in his throat, "I am going away to-morrow—thousands of miles away, and it is possible I may never see your young mistress again. I came to-night to say good-bye, for I had no idea that she was going away, and she knows nothing of the long journey I am making. I want to tell her of my going, and to explain why I could not see her, before I went; but if I write to her, that villain will probably steal the letters, and she will still be wondering what has happened and why I do not write. I feel I can trust you, Sarah. Will you help me?"

"That I will, sir," she replied with warmth; "and I can help you, too. Just write what you want to say, and I will send it in a letter to my sister, who is Miss Violet's maid, and she will give it 'er sure enough, and if you leave your address with me, sir, I will forward hanything Miss Violet may send."

"God bless you, Sarah," and Alston shook her warmly by the hand. He then took a piece of paper out of his pocket, and hurriedly wrote a few lines of farewell in pencil, promising to write more fully that night. This he gave to Sarah, together with his own address. Then pressing some money into her hand, he left her.

"Poor fellow," muttered the girl as she watched him walking abstractedly towards the station; "I will not fail him; I wonder where he is going to; and she looked at the paper he had given her. The address was:

"Post Office, St. John's, Newfoundland."

CHAPTER IX.

"THE COPPER KING'S" STORY.

On Saturday, at mid-day, Alston left Liverpool in the "Copper King's" yacht, the *Placentia*, on his voyage round the world.

The first stage of the journey was to Newfoundland, where "the King" had his mines. It was "the King's" intention to call in at St. John's, the capital of the island, and then to run up to his mining property on the east coast. Having transacted such business-matters as were necessary, and put, as he termed it,

everything in "apple-pie order," he proposed turning back and making for New York. From there the way would be to the West Indian Isles, and thence to Rio; from Rio round Cape Horn to New Zealand; from New Zealand to Australia, and thence to Colombo. After a brief stay in Ceylon, the homeward journey *viâ* the Suez Canal would be commenced, and "the King" hoped to be back in England in about a year from the time of leaving Liverpool.

Beyond a few flying visits to the Continent, Alston had not travelled much, and he viewed with delight the prospect of a run across the Atlantic.

He was a good sailor, and had a genuine love for the sea, a love which those who are not sailors can never understand. To a good sailor, life on the ocean is equally pleasurable, whether passed on one of the floating palaces, which ply between Liverpool and New York, or in a sailing vessel; but to Alston, in his present frame of mind, a passage in one of the former would have been absolutely detestable, whilst the seclusion of the yacht suited him admirably.

On a yacht, all the fuss and bother peculiar to the great passenger-ships are absent; those on board are invariably selected on account of their good fellow-

ship, and the petty jealousies and vulgar quarrels which disfigure a journey on an Atlantic liner are unknown.

Mr. Watson, too, was a genial companion, and Alston soon found himself on excellent terms with him. "The King" liked the frank, manly young fellow whom he had taken as his travelling physician, and he entrusted him with many confidences.

When Alston took the night mail for Liverpool, after writing a lengthy letter to Violet, his heart was sad, and all his natural buoyancy of spirit seemed to have left him. His employer did not fail to notice the change in him, and he at once surmised the cause.

"You are not yourself to-day," he said, as they steamed out of Liverpool harbour. "Now, when a young man, who has all the world before him, suddenly takes it into his head to feel miserable, one needn't be a prophet to be able to tell what the nature of his disease is."

At this Alston had slightly coloured.

"Ah! I know I was right," continued "the King," looking at him keenly. "There's a woman at the bottom of it. Now, young man, take my advice and clear your mind of all thoughts about women, for there is no woman living that is worth troubling about."

"There, sir, you are wrong," replied Alston. "I know of one; and if you knew her too, you would think as I do."

At this point the subject had dropped, Alston being little inclined at the time to continue the conversation, and Mr. Watson had felt that it would be kinder to leave him to his own thoughts.

But later on, when their relation to each other became more confidential, Alston briefly told "the King" how matters stood with him.

"The King" had a sympathetic heart, and he heard the young man's story with profound interest.

"You ask me," he said, when Alston had concluded, "what I should have done under the circumstances. Well, the first thing I should have done would have been to have gone straight to that foreign watering-place and soundly kicked that rascally medium."

"But, sir," broke in Alston, "you forget that I could not very well do that, much as it was in my mind to do so. I had given my word to be with you at Liverpool the next day; and under no circumstances could I have broken it."

"Well said, young man—well said," warmly rejoined Mr. Watson, patting him on the shoulder. "You've got the right

stuff in you, and the woman who gets you will have somebody to be proud of."

This was too much for Alston, who blushed deeply.

"What! blushing again?" laughed the old man. Why, you are as modest as a school-girl. Modesty, my young friend," he continued, "is out of place in these days of universal cheek and push. Every man should know his own worth, and place his own market-value upon his abilities. If you don't know your own worth, it's time you did, and you won't succeed in life until you do. The world values a man by the estimate he puts upon himself; and your modest, retiring man has got to take a back seat, no matter how great his abilities may be, when he comes in competition with those who, although intellectually his inferiors, are his superiors in push and self-consciousness. We move too fast in these days to look deeply into things, and are content to merely skim the surface; and it is just these folk who have everything on the surface and very little beneath who attract the most notice.

"But," and he looked at him admiringly, "you'll do. You are, I expect, modest only where women are concerned, and you certainly have plenty of 'go.' I like you, young man, and that's the truth; for

you are a man of your word, and what you have to say you say out straight; and that's what I, above all, like in a man. I would like it in a woman also; but where's the woman who says outright what she thinks, except it is in running down another woman, or asking her husband for a new bonnet? I haven't as yet, thank heaven, needed much of your doctoring, although before the journey's over, I probably may have to consult you more than I care to. I am convinced you know your business, and already I feel better than when I started. You may depend upon it that you won't be a loser by coming with me; for my friendship in a world where the golden calf is first amongst the gods that people worship counts for something."

Alston murmured his thanks, and expressed a hope that he might prove worthy of his friendship.

On one occasion the conversation turned upon Spiritualism.

"I have no faith in those professional mediums," remarked "the King," "and the rubbish which the supposed spirits talk, and the vulgar antics they cut when they appear, are enough to disgust any one. But all the same, I am inclined to believe in the existence of a spirit world.

I don't mean the kind of spirits who appear at séances at so much per hour, and bang about tables and play the tom-fool generally; but the spirits of those whom we loved on earth, and who, in some instances, still watch over us. They require no rascally mediums to call them forth, but choose their own time and place for their appearance. You shake your head," added Mr. Watson gravely; "but I have had proof of this on more than one occasion.

"Listen! When my mother died, I was far away in Australia, and I had no idea of her being ill. I was in camp at the time, and had fallen asleep after a hard day's work—a good sound sleep such as one never seems to get in the cities. All at once I woke, and felt restless and uneasy. Why, I couldn't explain. I got up and looked out. The camp was as still as death; the deep notes of my snoring partner and the ugly cry of a laughing jackass—a bird one sees nowhere, I believe, out of Australia—being the only sounds of life. I went back to my bunk, and tried to shake off the feeling, but couldn't succeed anyhow. My thoughts went back to the home which I had left some two years before; and they centered upon my mother, who was, I believe, the only

person in the world who really loved me. My father was a harsh man, and I did not get on with him; and the fickleness of a woman—about which we won't speak just now—made home unbearable for me. So I packed up my things, and with fifty pounds in my pocket, left England to seek my fortune.

"I was one-and-twenty then—six years younger than you are—and though my heart was sad enough at leaving my mother, I was full of hope for the future. The Australian gold fever was then at its height, and I determined to go to Australia and try my luck there. I went, but luck was not with me, and I led a rough, hard life, full of the bitterest disappointments.

"But to come to the point with regard to that night. I have already told you that I lay down again and tried to sleep, but without success. How long I lay there I don't know; but all at once I seemed to feel a current of air sweeping over my face, and at the same time something which felt soft, like a hand, touch my brow. I got up and stared across the tent, and there, standing right in front of me, was a woman's form. *It was my mother!*"

Here he paused for a moment; and Alston saw the tears gathering in his clear grey eyes.

"I couldn't speak for a moment, for I was so completely taken aback by what I saw; but eventually I did manage to call out 'mother.' There was no answer, and in another moment she had disappeared.

"I jumped from my bed and searched the tent, and went outside and looked all round, but I could see nothing. I told my story to my partner the next morning, and he laughed at me. But some months later I received a letter telling me that my mother had died about the time she had appeared to me."

"It is certainly a very curious coincidence," remarked Alston when "the King" had finished.

"It was more than a mere coincidence," was the reply; "for I am as certain as I see you now before me, that the form I then saw was that of my mother. You will, I know, seek to explain it as a mere hallucination called up by my thoughts, whilst in an uneasy state, being concentrated upon my people at home. I cannot accept this explanation; for this is not the only time my mother has appeared to me.

"She has done so one since; and it happened in this way:

"After leaving Australia—for things did not go well with me out there—I went

to California to try my luck. There at the outset I had the same ill-fortune as I had had in Australia; but one day my partner and I struck a pocket which realized a few thousand dollars' worth of gold.

"It soon, however, exhausted itself, and we determined to make tracks for another district where we heard gold was being found in plenty. But before this, we decided to go to San Francisco to put in a bank the gold our claim had realized. The night before we were to set forth, I found myself unable to sleep, and the same feeling of unrest I had experienced in Australia the night my mother appeared to me came over me.

"I tried to shake off the feeling, and got up and took a turn in the open air; for my head ached, and I felt unusually feverish. But all my efforts were in vain; and when I returned to bed, I still found it impossible to sleep. My thoughts went back to my home in England, and to the mother I had left behind—for I could not picture her as one dead—and although I endeavoured to think of a thousand other things, the dominant idea would be my mother.

"I remember lying on my back, gazing at a star which glistened through a slit in the tent, when all at once it somehow struck me that I was not alone. There

was no one living within a mile of our claim, and the heavy breathing of my partner could be heard in the adjoining tent. I looked about me, but could see no one. Then suddenly a form seemed to shape itself out of the gloom and stand right in front of me.

"'What do you want, mother?' I said, for I saw it was she.

"She pointed in the direction of San Francisco, and then held up her hand as if to stay my going that way.

"Then she disappeared.

"I must have fainted away or have fallen suddenly asleep, for the next thing I remember was being roughly shaken by my partner, who was dressed and ready to start.

"'What, not up yet?' he said, 'we were to start at sunrise; and the sun's been up more than an hour since, and you still in bed. Come, Watson, this isn't like you.'

"I explained to him what had happened, but he laughed at me, and tried to reason me out of my belief.

"'You are nervous and out of sorts, old fellow, and in a state to imagine anything. The last time you believed you saw your mother you were, I remember, down on your luck; and when a man's got a fit of the blues, he's ready to see anything, from devils to angels. Come, pull yourself

together and get ready, for our journey's a long one, and we must get through the Devil's Gorge before it gets dark; for the road, you know, isn't very safe at any time, and to make the Gorge at night would simply be tempting Black Jim's lambs to knife us, or put a bullet through us.'

"'That's just it,' I said. 'I feel certain my mother came to warn us against starting to-day, and I'm not disposed to disregard her warning.'

"My partner looked at me in surprise when I said this.

"'Surely you are not in earnest, Watson?' he said. 'Why not to-day more than any other day? Surely if Black Jim's gang are on the look-out, they will pot us to-morrow or the next day; and if we've got to die, old man, what's the odds when the killing is done?'

"'That may be,' I said; 'but all the same, I am determined not to go to-day.'

"My partner assured me that I was a fool, and that my belief was only worthy of a weak-minded woman. I had, however, made up my mind, and no living person could have moved me. Finally he got angry and said he would leave me to my —— superstitions and go alone. I tried to persuade him from doing this, but he was stubborn, and annoyed at what he

termed my childishness, and he packed up his things, and filling his belt with nuggets and dust, set out in high dudgeon alone.

"After going, however, a hundred yards or so, he returned.

"'Don't let us part in anger, old man,' he said, holding out his hand, 'we've been partners for close upon four years now; and I shouldn't like a difference about a ghost to split us now. If we are to split, let it be about something more substantial than that;' and he laughed heartily.

"In a moment we were friends again; but I could not induce him to stop till to-morrow.

"'No; I've made up my mind,' he said, 'and you know what a stubborn chap I am when once I have determined upon a thing; and I'm going. If my time has come, it must be so. But, perhaps, after all you may be right; and, if so, I don't see why those murderous scoundrels should reap what I have sweated and toiled for: so here, old pard, take the dust and bring it along with you.' And he handed me his belt containing his share of our findings.

"'If I am alive when you get to 'Frisco, you can give it me there; but in case I should be murdered, I would like you to

promise to do one favour. It is this: I want you to take care of this money, and hand it over to my sister. She is all I have in the world; and it is for her, as you know, I have been working these years. Here is her address;' and he handed me an envelope.

"I promised to do as he wished, and as I could not persuade him to stay, I endeavoured to console him by saying that in all probability the warning was intended only for me.

"'We shall see,' he said, and with these words he went away.

"This was the last time I saw him alive; for two days after, his body, shot through the back, was found in the Devil's Gorge.

"So you see my mother's warning came true," concluded "the King" solemnly.

"That was thirty years ago, and I have not seen her since. But I feel convinced she will appear again—when, I know not. Once she came to tell me that she was dead; once she came to warn me that my life was in danger; and the third time she comes, it will be to let me know that my time has come."

CHAPTER X.

THE THIRD APPEARANCE.

NOTHING of importance happened during the voyage across the Atlantic, the weather being remarkably fine the whole time; and on September 1st, the *Placentia* steamed through "the Narrows" and entered St. John's Harbour.

The harbour of St. John's is one of the most beautiful harbours in the world, and, although small, it is capable of containing a goodly number of vessels; and ships of any draught can enter it at any time during the navigable period. It is perfectly land-locked, the only entrance being from the sea through a gateway of frowning rocks called "the Narrows." Outside this gateway the Atlantic may surge and roar, whilst the water inside the harbour remains absolutely calm and unruffled.

Looking from the sea at the rock-bound coast, it seems impossible that any entrance harbour can exist; and when the vessel's head makes straight for a wall of iron-like rock, it appears to those on board that the captain is wilfully courting destruction. Then all at once a slight crack is visible in the dark frowning wall, which

rises precipitously from the sea, and the ship steers direct for it. But even when you are close to it, it seems too narrow to admit of the ship's passage. It is all broad enough, however, and, slowing down, you leave the surge of the Atlantic for the more placid waters of the connecting-link between the harbour and the sea. It is just like going through a Thames lock on a gigantic scale, with towering jagged rocks on either side in place of the low stoned-faced banks of the "silvery river."

The narrow neck of water opens into a bay, shaped like an amphitheatre; houses rising tier upon tier, greeting the eye as one enters. They constitute the city of St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland, our oldest and least known colony. It is a city of about 30,000 inhabitants, and, with the exception of Harbour Grace, the only place of importance on the island, the business portion of the town is contained in the lower tier, and consists of a long winding street, formed of irregular rows of houses, possessing no pretence to architectural beauty. On the other tiers are the villas of the wealthy merchants, the private residences of the judges and members of Parliament. That squatty stone building standing back from the road is Parliament House, and that one to the

right is the official residence of his Excellency the Governor, whilst towering high above all the other buildings is the Roman Catholic Cathedral, one of the finest buildings on this side of the Atlantic.

The town, as you approach it, seems sunk in sleep, and the white and brown sails of the fishing-boats dotting the harbour lend an additional air of peace and quietness to the scene. Then, all at once, the sharp boom of a small cannon fired to announce the arrival of the fort-nightly mail-boat comes upon the stillness. Flocks of gulls and other northern sea-birds rise from the waters and circle with sharp cries around the vessels in the harbour, or skim the jagged peaks of the surrounding rocks, the fishermen's heads bob up from their boats, and their shouts mingle with the shrill notes of the birds; and the landing-stage, which previously exhibited no other sign of life than a shaggy dog sleeping in the noonday sun, is speedily crowded with people.

Business-men who have left their shops and counting-houses, politicians fresh from some momentous debate upon the unpatriotic conduct of the Newfoundland codfish in allowing themselves to be captured by French fishermen, priests and parsons

forgetful of their religious differences, rival editors seeking for "copy," an official from Government House, and a few, what, by stretching a point, one might term "fashionable idlers," are all there. For the arrival of the mail boat either from Halifax or the Mother-country is a matter of great importance to the somewhat benighted inhabitants of St. John's. In a seaport where letters and fresh faces only come once a fortnight, people are apt to think more of them than when they come every day.

When the *Placentia* drew up at the landing-stage, she was greeted by quite a large crowd of people; for "the King," in addition to being the richest man on the island, was exceedingly popular amongst all classes. For he was a generous man, and made good use of his wealth. He was almost idolized by the fishermen, whom he, in bad times, most liberally befriended. Thanks to the rapaciousness of the merchants, the prevalence of the iniquitous truck system, and the constant bad seasons, the fisher-folk were frequently reduced to a state of poverty that might in some cases have spelt starvation had it not been for "the King's" assistance.

"You are anxious, I suppose, to go to the post to see what good news may have

arrived for you?" said Mr. Watson, good-naturedly, to Alston as they stood together on the wharf.

"Yes, sir," replied the young man, with an eager look in his eye.

"Well, go ahead; and I hope you won't be disappointed," was the kindly rejoinder. "You won't find me here when you come back, as I have some important business matters to attend to, but I shall be back at six. We dine with Sir Walter Medway at 6.30," and with a friendly nod, he turned away, whilst Alston lost no time in going ahead, as "the King" expressed it.

Inquiring the road to the post-office, Alston threaded his way along the ill-paved street and finally entered the post-office—a brand-new building, offering in its brightness a striking contrast to the dingy houses by which it was surrounded, situated some distance from the landing-stage.

His eagerness in asking if there were anything for him, considerably amused the letter-clerk, whose whole life had been passed among a people who never excited themselves for a moment about anything but politics and codfish. The clerk took down a packet of letters, and leisurely looked them through, whilst Alston, who, as might be expected, was in a state of considerable excitement, could hardly

restrain himself from snatching the letters from his hand. After sorting the packet, and going in the same leisurely way through other pigeon-holes, he turned to Alston with the information that there was nothing at the post-office for him.

"Nothing!" almost shrieked Alston, "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," replied the man. I have nothing in my department;" and he turned to his other duties; for Alston, being neither a codfish nor a local politician, had no sort of interest for him.

"But perhaps there may be something for me in another department," said Alston in despair.

"What is it you are expecting, and from where do you expect it?" asked the clerk.

"I expect a letter either from London or the Continent; but there may also be a telegram."

"The direct mail from England—that is the European mail—only comes once a fortnight."

"Only once a fortnight!" echoed Alston, who had no idea when the mails started, or how long they took, and who, if his sweetheart had written at once, could not possibly have had a letter from her for at least another week.

"Yes, once a fortnight," added the clerk,

"and the last mail came in yesterday, so you will have to wait another thirteen days, although there is just the possibility of your letters coming *viâ* New York or Halifax."

"But you have direct cable communication with England and the Continent?" said Alston.

"Oh, yes; although all our news from Europe comes *viâ* Halifax, we are not allowed to tap it here on its way to Canada; so, after being first flashed here, it goes to Halifax, and is reflashed to us from there. We Newfoundlanders are thankful for the smallest mercies, I can assure you."

"But how can I know if there is a telegram for me?"

"Where would it be addressed to?"

"To the Post Office, I think."

"Well, in such case it ought certainly to be here. Perhaps I had better look again." He took down the budget of letters awaiting to be claimed, and looked them through again. "Here is a telegram, but it can't be for you," he said, looking at Alston's card. "It is addressed, you see, to Utslon, and your name is Alston."

"It must be for me," cried Alston eagerly.

"It comes from Bohemia, and the man who telegraphed the message has evidently made a hash of the name,"

and he made an unsuccessful grab at the telegram.

"I don't see very well how I can give it you," added the clerk dubiously. "The two names may be somewhat alike, but a message addressed to Utslon does not prove that it is intended for you."

"It's all right" broke in Alston, all impatient to read its contents. "If it isn't for me, I can give it you back again, and I will write on the envelope that it has been opened in error."

"I don't like to take the responsibility of doing so upon myself," was the reply; "but if you tell me where you are staying, I will get the instructions from the postmaster when he comes back."

"I am staying on Mr. Watson's yacht, the *Placentia*. I am his physician," said Alston.

"Oh!" replied the clerk, upon whom Mr. Watson's name seemed to act like magic, "if that's the case, I think I can let you have it." In his eyes the "Copper King" was a far greater personage than the Governor, the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the entire season's catch of cod-fish rolled up in one.

Alston eagerly took the despatch which he handed him, and with trembling fingers, tore open the cover.

It was from Violet, and ran as follows :

"Franzensbad, August 27.

"All right. Good Luck. God bless you.

"VIOLET."

The tears were in Alston's eyes as he read it—tears of great joy; and to the intense surprise of the clerk, who had never seen such a display of sentimentality, either in real life or upon the stage—for they have no theatre in St. John's, and the inhabitants are not cast in a sentimental mould—he actually kissed the message he held in his hand. Then inquiring the nearest way to the telegraph office, he rushed out into the street to send a reply, leaving the post-office official in a state of great perplexity as to whether he was who he claimed to be, or in reality an escaped lunatic.

For days after the clerk talked of nothing else; and his circle of acquaintances, who invariably took no interest whatever in any matter outside the doings of the local political parties and the state of the fish-market, listened to him with unbroken attention.

Having sent his message, Alston returned to the yacht and wrote a long letter to Violet, in which he told her all that had taken place since he left Liver-

pool. He told her briefly what their plans were, and asked her to address her next letter to New York.

"We leave to-morrow," he concluded, "for the copper-mines in Notre Dame Bay, and we shall, what with going and returning, and looking after things out there generally, be away about ten days. It is, I believe, 'the King's' intention to call here on his way to New York, and in such case I shall get your letter. For I feel sure, my love, you will have written to me. Ah, my darling, you cannot imagine my joy at getting your telegram. It has made quite another man of me already. To-day I was sad and down-hearted, and now I could shout for very gladness.

"You say 'all right.' How I hope everything is all right with you. But you must tell me everything in your letters, and hide nothing from me, and I will be equally frank with you.

"In twelve months, dearest, I shall be again with you, and then—. They say Time flies, but I hope he will put on an extra pair of wings this next year; for no matter how quickly the days go by, it will seem a long twelve months to me.

"With respect to Mr. Watson, I have already told you all about him, and how

sympathetic he is to me. You would like him so much, and I'm sure he—in spite of his being such a confirmed woman-hater—would like you. But who could know you and not like you?

"He is the kindest-hearted man I know, and certainly one of the shrewdest judges of character. He is immensely rich, but, without indulging in any of the ostentatious lavishness peculiar to some millionaires, he is exceedingly generous. Just before leaving England, he presented his native town with a public park, at a cost of some 15,000*l.*, although, so far as I can learn, his native town never did anything particularly to deserve it. When he was poor and struggling with adversity, very few in Newborough, I take it, troubled their heads about what had become of their townsman, but now that Mr. Watson is rich and influential, there is not one who neglects any opportunity of reminding him that he is a townsman of his.

"He, I think, laughs in his sleeves at times, at what is going on around him, but he is so thoroughly good-natured, that he, I firmly believe, takes pride in returning good for evil.

"For instance, I find that his secretary, a Mr. Simes, is the son of a woman who

jilted him to marry Simes' father. Judging by her portrait, she must have been a very handsome woman; and Mr. Watson took her faithlessness terribly to heart. It was mainly through her that he sought his fortunes abroad. When he was away, he heard that the marriage of his faithless sweetheart was not a happy one: her husband took to gambling, and having lost everything, finally left her. She died suddenly, leaving an only son wholly unprovided for.

"Mr. Watson, although he could ill afford it at the time, took upon himself the responsibility of this boy's education, and now that he is rich, he has made him his private secretary.

"Simes appears to be a good fellow, and, what is more, to be grateful to his patron.

"You will want to know, of course, what 'the King' is like. I will tell you as well as I can; but you know how bad I am at this sort of thing.

"Well, to begin with, he is not handsome neither is he tall. He is shortish in fact, and somewhat stoutly built. His eyes are grey, small, and piercing. His forehead is broad, and he brushes his hair back from off it. His eyebrows are thick, and of the kind called shaggy. His complexion is ruddy, and so is his beard; at

least it was, for it has already begun to show traces of the hand of time. He has a square-set jaw, and a resolute mouth. His age is three-and-fifty, but the rough life he has led, and the many troubles which have fallen to his lot, cause him to look considerably older."

Alston added some lines about his first impressions of Newfoundland; but he omitted all mention of Brown and his doings, for he did not care to reopen an old sore. Besides, he was at the moment so supremely happy.

He had just finished the letter and sealed it up for the post when Mr. Watson returned.

"We are a little late," he said, "but it doesn't, I suppose, take you long to dress? I can manage it in about ten minutes."

It did not take Alston long; and about twenty minutes later they were on their way to Sir Walter Medway's dinner.

Sir Walter, Alston found a most intelligent, gentlemanlike man; and he managed to glean more information about Newfoundland in the few minutes' conversation he had with him, than he had known any time before. Alston in fact, like the vast majority of Englishmen, was absolutely ignorant of everything apper-

taining to our oldest colony, and the facts which Sir Walter gave him respecting the island's fertility, climate, and mineral resources, astonished him exceedingly.

Altogether Alston spent a most enjoyable evening, and his first impressions of colonial hospitality were certainly highly favourable.

The walk back to the yacht was made in the moonlight; and Alston thought he had never seen anything so lovely as the descent of the mountainous road into the queer, crooked streets of the town with the sparkling land-locked basin at its feet.

"The King," who had talked but little during the evening, was singularly silent during the walk home; but Alston, who had discovered that he was averse to being disturbed when in such moods, hesitated to talk to him. Once, however, he asked him if he felt well, and was informed that nothing ailed him.

When they got on board, "the King," who seemed tired and heavy, although his eyes looked unusually bright and wakeful, retired at once to his cabin. But Alston, who was too full of his thoughts of Violet to feel sleepy, went on deck.

He sat smoking, watching the waves ripple against the sides of the fishing craft

and the moonbeams play upon the pebbles on the shore. Looking through "the Narrows," he could see the mighty Atlantic rolling past the rocky entrance, and his thoughts went out on those waves to her whom he loved.

How long he sat there he knew not, for a man in his mood takes no heed of time, but presently a footstep sounded behind him, and a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder. He started, and, turning suddenly, saw Mr. Watson standing beside him. "The King's" face was deadly pale, and a strange light was in his eyes.

"I have seen her," he said solemnly. *She has appeared to me for the third time!*"

CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT APPARITIONS.

"YES," continued "the King," "I have seen my mother for the third time; and the end now is not far off."

Alston tried to reason with him, but without avail.

"You may say what you like," he remarked gravely, "but I am convinced that what I saw was my mother's form, and

that she has come to warn me I must die. You, like my poor partner, think I am labouring under a delusion; but you are mistaken.

"Feel my pulse," and he held out his wrist; does it throb or beat higher? Look at me carefully, straight in the face —so! Now, do I look like a man who has been dreaming, and is scared out of his wits? No, my young friend, I am perfectly calm and collected, and as sane as you are."

Alston hastened to assure him that he in no way questioned his sanity, but that he could not help thinking he was labouring under an hallucination.

"We shall see; we shall see," solemnly replied the old man; and, without another word, he left the deck.

Alston followed him and begged of him to take a sleeping draught. This, however, he firmly refused to do.

"I shall sleep soundly enough," he said, "and now, good-night—or rather, good-morning; for it is after one o'clock. Remember, we breakfast at eight, and at nine we start." And, so saying, he retired to his cabin.

The young man waited outside the cabin until the deep breathing that came from within told him that its inmate was asleep.

Then, and then only, did he retire to his berth.

Alston tried to sleep, but in vain. The event of the night lay upon him like a nightmare. The earnestness of Mr. Watson impressed him greatly; and he never for a moment doubted that the old man firmly believed that he had seen the apparition of his mother. But, all the same, he could not bring himself to believe in the reality of such a thing. His medical training had served to make him sceptical about such matters, and he preferred exhausting the natural before rushing to the supernatural for an explanation of everything of the kind, no matter how circumstantially accurate, from a supernatural point of view, it might be.

He was convinced that every apparition claimed to have been seen by man was subjective and not objective; and, although Mr. Watson appeared to be outwardly calm and collected, the strange, far-away look in the old man's eyes lent colour to his contention, that he was labouring under an hallucination.

Almost every imaginative person has, at some time or other, seen "ghosts;" but how few have at the moment taken steps to ascertain the exact composition of their ghostly visitors. Most people,

when they fancy they see "a ghost," pop their heads under the bedclothes—for "spooks" generally come when one is sleepless in bed—or jump up and strike a light. By the time the trembling mortal has had sufficient courage to peep from beneath the blankets, the "ghost" will in all probability have gone; whilst it stands to reason that visitors from the other world, who choose to appear at their best in the darkness of midnight, are averse to having the light of a candle or gas thrown upon them.

Some people, of a militant disposition, have been known to throw boots at a ghost's head. But this practice is not to be commended; for it not only serves to drive the ghost away, but it is liable to cause unexpected damage to the bed-room crockery.

"Spooks" require far more considerate treatment, and they should at all times be approached philosophically. A ghost doesn't like to see people bury their heads under the bedclothes, or have heavy boots thrown at him the moment he appears. It is true he invariably chooses a most unearthly hour for making his call, and he dispenses with the formalities of knocking or asking your permission to come in, but, all the same, he is a visitor

who probably has something important to communicate, otherwise, I presume, he would not take the trouble to put in an appearance—and should be treated with consideration.

Like the hare that is to be served up in so many tempting ways; you must first catch your ghost before you can analyze him; but these ghostly visitants are more difficult to catch than the fleetest of hares, and no matter how vigilant a man may be, the "spook" he seeks to capture always manages somehow or other to elude his grasp.

There is a wariness about "spooks" that does not speak very well for their confidence in mortals. They certainly come within speaking distance, but they seldom come within grasping distance. Indeed, outside of the Spiritualistic séances, when the "spirits" are of the earth earthy, whoever heard of a man taking a ghost by the hand? Is it because they are afraid of contamination, or what?

For my part I give it up. I, too, have had my moments when I have seen "ghosts." On one occasion I had been to a séance, where the form of one "Skiwaukee," an Indian brave, was materialized. He did a war-dance, gave a loud whoop, brandished a tomahawk to

the consternation of the less experienced sitters, who thought every moment he was bent upon scalping some one, and then disappeared behind a black curtain, which screened the medium, through whom he was produced, from the circle.

I could not get sufficiently near to the "shade" to see what he was composed of, but he looked very material, and the tarnished condition of his apparel gave one the impression that he had either travelled a long distance without changing his clothes, or had on his arrival in London picked up some disused theatrical properties cheap.

But, to be frank, "the form" made an impression on me all the same. For he knew his business, and his war-dance alone was worth the money I had paid for the entire exhibition.

On my return home, I thought a good deal about this "spirit." Indeed, I found it extremely difficult to get him out of my mind, and when I went to bed, he still haunted me. I remember waking up from a fitful sleep with his last and loudest war-whoop in my ears; and looking into the semi-darkness, I thought I saw his jet-black eyes staring at me. I involuntarily closed my eyes, and when I opened them again he was gone. But at

the same moment I felt the bed-clothes being dragged off me, and the thought that he might do me to death with his tomahawk flashed through my mind. I was but half awake, yet I was sufficiently conscious to debate within myself at which point he might begin the attack. Red Indians, I knew, invariably went for one's scalp-lock, and I covered my head with my hands. But the clothes seemed to be dragged from the bottom; and fancy pictures of a demoniacal red-skin cutting off my toes and dangling them at his girdle presented themselves to me.

I shivered and turned cold, and did my best to remember my prayers, and forget the evils of my life. But at the same time I became more wide awake, and better able to criticize the situation. And what did I discover? Simply that in my half-dreamy state I had been unconsciously dragging off the bedclothes with my own foot; which fact I, through my mind being so taken up with the fancied apparition of the materialized brave and the fears begot by his presence, had omitted to notice.

Needless to say I—metaphorically a hundred times, and actually once or twice—punched my head for my folly, and then fell asleep to dream of people who pulled

the clothes off their beds, and were silly enough to imagine it was the work of "spirits."

On another occasion on which I saw a "ghost," I was staying at an hotel at Great Grimsby. My nerves were out of order, and I positively started at my own reflection in the ponderous looking-glass as I entered the gloomy bed-room in which I was to sleep. It seemed a fit room for ghostly visitors, and before I jumped into bed, I, by the dim light of a spluttering candle, made a thorough search of the bed, the heavy hanging curtains, the cumbrous chest of drawers, and the white-shrouded dressing-table. For, in my nervousness, I was fully prepared to see either a burglar with black mask and jemmy jump out and confront me, or a muslin-clad "spook" jibber at me from every corner into which I looked.

I was, as may be expected, not in a particularly easy state of mind when I eventually found myself between the sheets. For a while I lay watching a ray of moonlight which managed to creep through a hole in the window-blind, before which I every moment expected a "full clad form" would disport itself. But nothing appeared, and finally I got tired of gazing at that solitary moon-beam, and,

with a last look round the room, I turned on my side and fell asleep.

It was a case of to sleep, to sleep, but not to rest, with a vengeance. For I tossed about, not only physically, but mentally, and voices seemed to be sounding in my ears.

"Look up! look up!" they seemed to say, "and you will see a ghost;" and the "ghost" I was called upon to see had some connection with the noble house of Y. It, so far as I could gather in my confused mental state, was a family ghost of high character and noble instincts, who took it upon himself to appear at irregular intervals for the purpose of letting Lord Y. know there was still a ghost in the family.

Eventually I did look up; and there, sure enough, standing to my right, was a shadowy form, attired in clothes of the Georgian period.

He looked at me solemnly, and, in my fancy, I could even see the rolling of his eye. His body appeared to be lost in shadow, his face, head, and shoulders only being visible.

I had sufficient presence of mind to ask myself whether it was a subjective or an objective form that I saw, and the necessary readiness to put the matter to a test.

I looked at the "ghost." He was still there, or rather his head was. Then I placed my hands before my eyes to shut him from my sight. But he was still there; and this conclusively proved that the creature was but a phantom of my own brain. I rubbed my eyes, and there was an end to the form; and soon after I fell asleep.

The next morning I questioned myself as to the cause, and elicited two important answers, each one in itself sufficient, under the circumstances, to explain the appearance of any ghost.

Firstly, I had been reading in the newspapers an account of Dr. Jessop's encounter with an alleged "spook," which "spook" I found bore a striking likeness to the one my fancy had conjured up. Secondly, I had eaten just before going to bed a very tough Welsh rare-bit, and had drunk a glass of hot brandy and water, the result being a violent attack of indigestion.

Any one anxious to see ghosts will find the above an excellent recipe.

My last interview with a "spook" took place but a few months back. I was on a visit to the High Sheriff of one of the Midland counties, who has the distinguished honour of possessing a family ghost. It is not the ghost of any of his ancestors,

but one that he purchased with the house, the pictures, and the fixtures generally. It is a well-bred "spook," and, so far as I can learn, never seeks to molest or in any way annoy the present occupants of the home of his forefathers. But he is exceedingly particular all the same, and strongly resents any infringement of his just rights, which consist of being allowed a permanent tenancy, rent free, of the room in which he, whilst in the flesh, was done to death. He apparently has no objection to any one entering the room in which he was murdered, or examining in the daytime the boards upon which his life-blood was spilled, but he has the greatest objection to the room being occupied at night, and invariably manages to make it exceedingly uncomfortable for those who are rash enough to sleep therein.

It was my fate to occupy this room on the occasion of my visit.

I had heard all about the murder, which occurred, I believe, during the civil wars, and I felt a great compassion for the murdered man; but, all the same, I, truth to tell, had a morbid curiosity to make his ghost's acquaintance.

I sat writing awhile on reaching my room, without getting the slightest

indication of the ghost being at hand; but, thinking perhaps he had an objection to the light, I brought my correspondence to an abrupt termination, and tumbled into bed.

I lay awake for fully an hour, watching the glow from the fire play upon the pictures on the wall, and then, feeling tired of watching, I closed my eyes in sleep.

How long I slept I do not know, but it was sufficiently long to enable me to picture the entire act of the terrible tragedy which had, more than two centuries before, been perpetrated in that very room.

I saw the life-blood welling from the murdered man's side, dyeing the boards as it fell. I heard his cry of agony and the sound of his murderer's retreating footsteps; and then I awoke.

The fire had by this time burnt very low; but a tongue of flame darted through the thick iron bars of the ancient grate, and fell upon the blood stains on the floor. It was as if they had been suddenly renewed with human blood, so fresh and bright did they in that moment appear.

I should not in that moment have been surprised had I seen the writhing form of the dying man upon the floor, or had his

ghost suddenly formed himself out of the surrounding gloom and stood in front of me.

Nothing, however, was visible. But all at once a weird rattling sound was heard, followed by a series of loud knocks, which echoed strangely in that silent room. "They are forcing the door," I thought, "and now will follow the murder scene."

I had hardly formed these words in my mind, when something close to the dressing-table fell with a sharp rattle. Then for awhile all was silent again.

Presently the rasping, bumping noises were again heard, and looking in the direction from which they appeared to come, I saw a pair of fiery red eyes fixed upon me.

The sight, to use a vulgarism, gave me a decided "turn," whilst it, at the same time, had a certain fascination for me. I was now wide awake, and perfectly conscious of everything around me! and I was determined to see the thing through. A heavy candlestick stood by my side, and grasping it, I determined to launch it at the owner of those blood-red eyes. They were fixed on me with the fascinating stare of a snake, and they moved not when I lifted up the candlestick preparatory to throwing it.

I threw it, and my aim was good, for a loud squeal followed the throw.

I struck a light, and saw—what, reader do you think? A ghost? *No, the tail of a retreating rat.*

CHAPTER XII.

WRECKED!

Alston arose early the next morning, but "the King" was already up. He found him pacing the deck as if in deep thought.

Mr. Watson looked up as Alston approached. There was no trace of the strange look of the night before in his eyes, and he greeted the young surgeon with a cheery smile.

"How do you find yourself this morning?" asked Alston. "Did you sleep well?"

"Sleep well? Like a top," was the reply; "and, as for feeling well, I don't think I ever felt better." He certainly did look well; and one would never imagine that a man with his bright, clear eyes and shrewd, bright face, was the sort of person to "see ghosts."

Mr. Watson did not speak about last night's apparition, and Alston, thinking the subject might be distasteful to him, did not refer to it.

After breakfast, "the King" received several visitors, and transacted various business-matters. This done, orders were given to make ready to leave, and at ten o'clock the *Placentia* left the landing-stage amidst the waving of hats and a chorus of good-byes.

It was a gloriously fine day. The sun shone brightly on high, and there was not a cloud in the sky. The Atlantic outside "the Narrows" was as calm as the harbour they had left. The coast-line, rugged and irregular, was visible for many miles, and Alston thought he had never seen anything so lovely in all his life.

"This is a beautiful country," he said to Mr. Watson, who was watching the disappearing towers of the Roman Catholic cathedral.

"Beautiful, my lad," replied "the King;" "for a certain kind of beauty it has no equal. Where is there another coast in the world like it for rugged grandeur? Tasmania comes next to it, but there is too much sameness about Tasmanian scenery, whilst this island is full of scenic surprises. But you see Newfoundland at its best now. In winter it is quite another thing. Then, when the ice floats in blocks into the harbour, and everything is covered with snow and

nipped with frost, with a cutting wind blowing up from the sea, it is anything but a cheerful place to look at, I can assure you. From June up to October Newfoundland is right enough, and the most fastidious person would find the climate to his liking; but from November up to the end of May, Newfoundland is not exactly an earthly Paradise."

"Is it so very cold there?" asked Alston.

"It is not so much the cold—for Newfoundland is, on the whole, considerably warmer than the mainland of Canada—but the high winds" (and he gave an emphatic whistle) "which sweep over the island during the winter are—well a caution to snakes. You have no idea what it is like, then. Of course in the interior it is not quite so bad; and the climate is much milder than on the sea-coast; but even there the winds have played terrible havoc amongst the trees, and I question very much if there is any really fine timber left."

"I thought," said Alston, "that the island was singularly rich in timber."

"So it has always been supposed," replied Mr. Watson; "but recent explorations have considerably damped the expectations in this direction. However, but little is known about the island any-

way; and I don't suppose there is a man living who has been right across it."

"That seems strange," remarked his companion, "seeing that the island has been so long in our possession."

"Not at all," added "the King," "when you come to consider that everything has been done to discourage enterprise in the colony. Firstly, the Imperial Government viewed Newfoundland merely as a recruiting-ground for its seamen, and strictly forbade the erection of houses which had not connection with this scheme; indeed, colonization was not only discouraged, but it was fettered in every possible way. The governor had the power to order the houses of colonists to be pulled down; and it was not until recent years that free building in St. John's was permitted. The merchants, on the other hand, circulated, for their own selfish purposes, the most injurious statements respecting the resources and general fertility of the island. With them it was a mere barren, inhospitable rock, incapable of cultivation, and worth nothing beyond the fish in its waters. For years the merchants have been waxing rich at the expense of the poor fishermen, who, with nothing open to them beyond the precarious living to be obtained on the

fishing-grounds, are in their clutches from year's end to year's end. It consequently is to the merchant's interests to keep the country locked up as long as possible; for the day Newfoundland is opened up to settlement, the monopoly of these blood-suckers will end."

"But do you really think," asked Alston, "that there are any good agricultural grounds in Newfoundland?"

"Certainly! why, in the region of the Gandes and Exploit Rivers there is, I am told, any amount of good land; whilst much of the West Coast is fit for grazing or agricultural purposes."

"But, how comes it, then, that so very few of the inhabitants are engaged in agriculture?" asked Alston, who was deeply interested in what he heard.

"That is easily explained," was the reply; "the inhabitants have for generations been led to look to the sea instead of to the land for a livelihood, and they are, as a matter of fact, entirly ignorant upon all matters relating to agriculture; whilst immigration from Europe has been persistently opposed by the parties in power at St. John's. Although the finest vegetables can be grown on the island, as well as hay and corn, the people import everything, down to a cabbage. This is as

absurd as it is impolitic, but it suits the merchants, who point to the fact as evidence of the sterility of the soil, whilst they profit by the sale of the imported produce.

"For my part," continued the shrewd old man, "I have no great faith in Newfoundland as an agricultural country. The season is too short, and, whilst there is good soil here and there, there is not enough of it to encourage agriculture on a large scale. The Government would do well, however, to encourage the immigration of small farmers—such as the crofters—for it seems a perfect sin that the land which is fit to cultivate should remain for ever wild. The present population of the island is under 200,000, mostly scattered along the coast, and principally engaged in fishing; whilst with judicious settlements it is capable of maintaining at least five times that number.

"But the future of the country lies neither in its fisheries, nor in its agricultural wealth, but in its undeveloped mineral resources. The island is marvellously rich in minerals of all kinds—gold, silver, iron, lead, and copper; but it lacks one thing, and that is coal."

"I had no idea there was gold upon the island," remarked Alston.

"Neither have the benighted islanders themselves," replied "the King;" "but it exists all the same. The Indians have repeatedly brought me specimens of gold quartz; and some day I shall take a hand at prospecting for gold. But, for the present, my copper-mines—which I have no hesitation in saying are the richest in the world—are as good as gold-mines, and until they become exhausted, there is no incentive to go gold-hunting.

"Have you ever heard the story of how I came upon these mines?" (Alston replied in the negative.) "Well, one day I will tell you. It's a queer story, and has set many a hard-headed man wondering. But it's true for all that, although how the Indian medicine-man worked the oracle I have never been able to make out."

Here the conversation ended.

At dinner "the King" was singularly uncommunicative, and after dinner he retired to his cabin, feeling, as he said, somewhat sleepy.

Alston sat on deck, watching the white flecked waves break upon the coast, with the sun sinking behind the coal-black cliffs.

"How peaceful everything seems," thought the young man. "Can this be the land of storms, of fog and wind, this?"

And for answer the waves rolled gently on, and the sun-rays turned into gold everything they touched.

It was a glorious evening, giving promise of a beautiful night.

Alston sat alone on deck, for Mr. Watson still remained in his cabin. On went the vessel in the twilight, and the coast faded into a blurred mass of purple haze. Then the young man went below and stood outside "the King's" cabin. The deep breathing from within told him that he still slept.

For awhile Alston read, and then wrote some letters home. This done, he again went to Mr. Watson's cabin, but the sleeper was not yet awake. At this moment he felt the vessel gradually slacken speed; and wondering what it could mean, he ran on deck.

The answer was apparent. A mist had suddenly arisen. The land was no longer visible, and the stars in the sky were completely obscured. The mist increased in density, until Alston could distinguish nothing save the dim form of the crew moving about the deck. They looked like evil spirits trying to evade the shrouds the fog was making for them. The suddenness with which the fog had come upon them had taken everybody by

surprise, and Alston could hear orders being hurriedly given the sailors, which left him in no doubt as to the difficult if not dangerous position in which the vessel was.

He determined to go and wake Mr. Watson. Feeling his way with difficulty across the deck, he was on the point of descending, when he heard some one coming up the stairs. He could distinguish a something which looked like a man carrying a lantern.

The form mounted the last step, and held the lantern in front of him. Then Alston saw that it was "the King."

There was just enough light from the lantern to enable the young man to see the expression on its holder's face. It was deadly pale; or was it the white mist that made it look so? But there was a light in the old man's eyes that riveted Alston's attention.

The fog increased in density, and with it came a watery chilliness that caused him to shiver as he stood there.

For a moment the young man seemed unable to speak, and he could not take his eyes off Mr. Watson's face. Then with an effort, he recovered himself, and stretched out his hand to guide him. "The King's" hand was deadly cold, and there was no response to the touch.

Alston spoke to him, but there was no reply; and looking at him more closely, he found that he was walking in his sleep.

Fearful of waking him, Alston remained silent; and the sleep-walker, utterly unconscious of the young man's presence, held his lantern on high and peered through the wall of fog in the direction of the obliterated coast.

Meanwhile the whistles gave forth shrill orders, and the fog-horn sounded deep and melancholy; ghostly forms flitted here and there with lights, but the sleeping man moved not.

His eyes were fixed on space, as if trying to pierce the dense white mass before him.

The position of the vessel was a perilous one, for although there was little to fear from collision, the irregular, treacherous coast in itself formed sufficient cause for anxiety.

To make matters worse, the officer in charge did not appear to know his whereabouts, and from time to time the engine stopped, and the loud splash of the sounding lead was repeatedly heard.

There is no worse peril at sea than that of fog, and no fog so thick, so fraught with perils, as that which envelops the coast of Newfoundland.

There, without a moment's warning, a dense fog will suddenly arise, obscuring the sun on high, shutting out all sight of land turning day into night.

Newfoundland is rightly called the "land of fogs;" although, more correctly speaking, it should be called the "coast of fogs." For mists which may at St. John's shut out all sight of the sea, will probably have no existence a few miles inland. I have left the capital obscured in a dense fog, with a dull sky overhead, and a cold wind coming up from the Atlantic, to find, less than ten miles up country, a clear, cloudless sky, with a blazing sun overhead.

The officer in charge of the *Placentia* had but little knowledge of the Newfoundland coast, and had not calculated the chances of suddenly running into a fog-bank. Indeed, who could have foretold that so bright a day and so clear an evening would have had such a termination?

The vessel in its course had hugged the shore somewhat closely—far too closely, under the present circumstances, to be safe.

Alston could hear the water breaking on the shore as he stood there, and every moment he expected the yacht would strike a rock. It was a moment of terrible anxiety for him, and he debated in his

mind whether he ought not to wake Mr. Watson.

To wake him might, under the circumstances, be attended with serious if not fatal effects, whilst he rightly considered Mr. Watson ought certainly to know the dangers of the situation. Whilst thus deliberating as to the course he should take, he heard some one groping behind him.

He held out the lantern, and in another moment the captain was at his side.

"Where is Mr. Watson?" said the officer hastily; and Alston could see by the dim light that his pale face wore an expression of the deepest anxiety.

"He is here," and the young man pointed out the erect form of "the King," gazing silently into the darkness.

"I must speak with him. I must tell him the worst," and the husky voice quivered with excitement.

"Hush!" replied Alston, "he sleeps. But what is the worst? Tell me, and I will do my best to wake him with as little shock as possible."

"Our position is a perilous one," answered the officer. "We may at any moment strike a rock, and, in this fog, God alone knows what will become of us. There is a wind rising, and it may clear away the fog; but it blows from the sea,

and may drive us on shore before we know where we are."

"I will wake him," replied Alston calmly; and he put his hand upon Mr. Watson's shoulder.

"I am not asleep; I have heard all," and to the astonishment of the two men, he turned and faced them.

"You have heard all," said the officer, in a low voice, "and know the danger we are in? You will not blame me if anything happens?" he added pathetically.

"I can blame no one but myself," replied the old man. "I ought not to have started to-day, for I was warned that my time had come. The fault is with me. God forgive me. For there is, I fear, no hope for us. Just ahead is a long reef, barely covered with water. We shall strike it, and we shall sink, and—" (Here he paused for a moment.) "I have seen it all—all!" And he shuddered and placed his hands on his eyes, as if to shut out the sight of what he had seen in his dreams.

Barely had the old man finished speaking when, with a shock that sent them all staggering, and a crashing sound that smote them all with dread, the vessel went aground. *She had struck the long line of jagged reef.*

CHAPTER XIII.

IN FRANZENSBAD.

THE reader will remember that when Alston left for Newfoundland, Violet was with her mother at Franzensbad. Mrs. Parkinson had been induced to go there by Brown, who said that the waters had a tendency to develop mediumship with those who drank them. This was quite sufficient to decide that lady, who, had she been told that a journey to Jerusalem instead of to the Bohemian watering-place would be likely to make her more mediumistic, would, I believe, have unhesitatingly gone there.

Brown's reason for going to Franzensbad was, however, not so much on Mrs. Parkinson's account as on his own. He had learned that a Russian Grand Duke and a Grand Duchess, firm believers in spiritualism, were to be there during the season, and he knew that he had only to go there to be at once welcomed, for his séance with the Czar had created no little stir in Court circles. There were also many other distinguished people visiting Franzensbad at the same time, who might be disposed to give him a "sitting." He

saw a prospect of reaping a golden harvest there, and he determined not to neglect the opportunity. But, at the same time, he did not propose to loose his hold of Mrs. Parkinson, who was a goose that would probably lay golden eggs all the year round. If he went away, she might possibly call in another medium, who would usurp his own influence over her; and this was an eventuality which the worthy Brown wished above all things to avoid. He had made up his mind to go to Franzensbad, but he did not feel disposed to leave his victim behind. He had, however, as I have already said, no difficulty in persuading Mrs. Parkinson to go also, not only on the ground that her mediumistic gifts would be strengthened thereby, but on her daughter's account.

"There is an adverse influence at work; and I feel powerless to produce any materialization so long as we remain here," had said the artful medium, when Mrs. Parkinson pressed him to bring about the promised materialization.

"I feared so," had replied the good lady; "this comes of corresponding with sceptics. I firmly believe, with you, that evil influences can be conveyed by letter; and you will understand what a

shock each letter that comes from that man gives me. Mrs. Parkinson always referred to Alston now as "that man." When Mrs. Parkinson communicated her intention of going on the Continent, Violet raised no objection. She, in fact, was glad to get away from Parkhurst, which had become hateful to her since her lover had been forbidden its sacred precincts. She was, however, sad at heart at not seeing him before she left; but the suddenness of their departure rendered this impossible. When one is so very much in love, it is hard to be separated.

Otherwise Violet found life in Franzensbad very agreeable. It was the first time she had been to this famous watering-place, and it had many charms for her. Everything was so fresh, so entirely different from what she had seen in watering-places at home. There were people there of all nations, and it amused her to hear the Babel of languages spoken at the Franzensbrunnen, when the folk came to drink the waters, or on the Cursaal balcony when they sipped their coffee and recounted the latest scandal. Violet was not a linguist, and understood but little of what was going on around her. This in a sense was lucky, for at times much

was said that a young girl ought not to hear.

The season was a particularly brilliant one, almost every civilized nation being represented by some of its most beautiful and famous women. I say women, because Franzensbad is visited almost solely by the fair sex, and the few men who were there, were but as poppy-heads in a field of wheat.

Prominent amongst the notables was the Princess Berbinsky, née Popinoff, whose exploits were the talk of every capital in Europe. At seventeen she had married the septuagenarian Prince Berbinsky, famed for his ugliness and his vices. There were even evil stories about her before she stood a bride at the altar, and since then, no woman living has been credited with more offences against the laws of morality than she. Of course nine-tenths of the stories told about her were absolutely untrue, but there was sufficient truth in the remaining tenth to cause the gates of Heaven to be for ever closed against her. She, although close upon forty, was still a woman of marvellous beauty, and the most adamantine heart softened under a look from her glorious dark eyes. Her fascination was fatal to every one upon whom she exercised

it; and she seemed to be able to enslave even by a mere look or a nod. I forget how many duels have been fought, and how many men have died by their own hand on her account; but I know it is a goodly number. Her course of evil-doing is not yet run, and before the year is out, other victims will be added to the already lengthy list. Just now Madame la Princesse is the pattern of propriety. She rises early and goes to bed at nine. She plays the interesting invalid to perfection, and no one looking at the graceful, well-bred woman, drinking the waters under the shade of the lindens, would imagine she was steeped to the lips in unmentionable crimes.

The world says that the Princess has neither heart nor conscience; but they do not know all. She, who could hear with a laugh of the suicide of her latest victim, and who said when the young Graf Winterschloss, fighting for her sake, fell before the Chevalier de Pontignac's bullet, "what a pity they were not both killed," had, believe me, her moments of remorse. She was not so marble as the world imagined; and could some have seen her in her fits of despair, they would probably not have believed their own eyes.

She, with all her outward hardness and

cool devilry, was inwardly a woman of strong emotions, and, like most Russians, was intensely superstitious. She was a Fatalist, and, difficult as it may be to reconcile such a thing with her known disbelief in the matter of religion—for the Princess had not yet arrived at that age when vice seeks consolation in religion—she was—at least she professed to be—a believer in Spiritualism.

This Brown was not long in discovering, and he took early steps to procure an introduction to her. She gave him several sittings, in which he produced manifestations that convinced her Highness of his genuineness as a medium.

The Princess was so impressed with Brown's mediumship, that she decided to have a special séance in her rooms at the Hotel Kronprinz, which the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess and some other distinguished personages had promised to attend.

Her Highness's patronage worked wonders for Brown, who was eagerly sought after by the ultra fashionable. He became quite the rage; and people would gaze after him with ill-concealed interest as he walked meditatively along the linden-shadowed road leading to the Cursaal.

Brown was a vain man; and this ex-

pression of interest pleased him beyond all calculation. But in the privacy of his room, he had many a chuckle over the folly of mankind in general, and so-called Spiritualists in particular.

"What born idiots they are," he would say to himself. "It puzzles me how they can be so easily taken in." And he would count over the notes he had received for his exhibitions of "spirit power." Altogether he had done very well; and for the special séance, the Princess had promised him a fee of 1000 francs. All in all, Brown reckoned that he would leave Franzensbad at least 10,000 francs richer than when he came.

Brown loved money, and he probably would have been as ready in exposing Spiritualism as he was in promulgating it had there been a prospect of its paying better. His ambition was to save enough money to retire upon; for, like all mediums, he was fearful of exposure, knowing full well that no matter how careful he might be in arranging his "sitters," a day would probably come when he would be laid by the heels. A man who lives a life of fraud daily runs the risk of exposure; and like the pitcher which goes once too often to the well, the most skilful of mediums is bound sooner or later to come to grief.

This Brown did not overlook, and he accordingly hastened to make money whilst the sun shone.

With his numerous private engagements, Brown was unable to devote much time to Mrs. Parkinson, who, however, was not exacting. It was intensely gratifying to her to find "her medium," as she called him, so much sought after by the salt of the earth.

"One has to go on the Continent to see how mediums are honoured," she said to Violet. "In England they are looked upon as either imbeciles or knaves; and the law (this with much bitterness) classes them as rogues and vagabonds. Here a medium is a somebody; and we might well take a lesson from these foreigners in their treatment of these gifted beings. I am sure if Mr. Brown were a prince," she continued, "he could not be made more of."

At this Violet merely shrugged her shoulders. She had ceased to argue with her mother—finding argument absolutely useless—upon the matter.

Her disgust for Brown never lessened, although he made great endeavours to be agreeable to her; and had she known how he had acted in the matter of her correspondence with Alston, and his corre-

spondence with her, she would at once have declined any communication with him whatever.

But she did not know; and, poor girl, she was from day to day in a state of profound anxiety as to the cause of her sweetheart's silence.

A thousand times a day she asked herself what it could mean; and each time the answer was unsatisfactory. She had perfect faith in him, and yet she was sorely troubled. For his silence was altogether inexplicable, especially as he knew she was absent from England, and had been prevented from saying the good-bye in person.

It never for a moment entered her mind that their correspondence had been tampered with; and she could only imagine that he was ill. This caused her great alarm, and as the days went by and no answer came to her letters, her anxiety betrayed itself in her face.

She looked pale and ill—so much so, in fact, that her mother suggested that she should see a doctor.

"You do not drink the waters, Violet," she said. "They might do you good."

"Thanks, mother," she replied, with a faint smile. "I have no wish to become

mediumistic, and otherwise I feel quite well. Franzensbad is a lovely place, and I enjoy it immensely."

"Stuff and nonsense," said her mother. "Do you look as if you enjoyed it? Why, you look as white as a sheet, and, when you are not listening to the music, you moon about all day as if you had no sort of interest in anything. You must see a doctor, Violet, for I cannot have you go on like this. I hope," she added, looking at her sharply, "that you are not worrying over that man,"

"Pray don't speak of him like that, mother;" and with tears starting to her eyes, she hastily retired to her room.

Brown, when he saw Violet's uneasiness, smiled grimly. He was proud of the success of his scheme.

The reader may fail to understand this individual's motive in causing a breach between Violet and Alston, when it might fairly be considered that it would be to his interest to let the young couple marry. For the money which Violet would forfeit through marrying without her mother's consent, would go to her mother, over whom, as it has been shown, he had considerable influence.

But, on the other hand, it must not be

forgotten that Brown owed Alston a grudge, and that such a vindictive nature as his would take pleasure in thwarting him in every possible way. Besides, there was another and even stronger motive, which the sequel will disclose.

When Violet retired to her room, she went out on the balcony.

Everything was still around her. It was barely nine, but already the little town seemed buried in sleep. For early to bed and early to rise is the motto in Franzensbad.

The moon was on high, and shone upon the little leafy bowers beneath her windows where they took their breakfast, and glistened upon the silent houses beyond.

Her thoughts were about her lover.

"Jack, Jack," she said in the fulness of her heart, "why don't you write? Are you ill, my darling, or are you only vexed? Write and tell me soon. I am sad with waiting. I have not courage to write again. I cannot think that you wish me to write no more; for what have I done? what have I done that this should be? We have been all to each other, my darling, and are still all, although your silence troubles me. It cannot be that you have ceased to love me. No, anything but that.

No, you are ill, Jack, you are ill;" and she broke into sobs.

A knock came upon the door, but she did not hear it, neither did she notice that her maid had entered the room.

"I have a letter for you, miss," said the girl, going to where she stood.

"For me?" replied her mistress, her heart leaping with expectation. "Where does it come from?"

"From London, miss, Sarah sent it on. She said I was to give it to you alone, so I brought it up as soon as I got it. But you ought to have had it a week ago, miss, that's a fact; but those furriners made some mistake about the address, and it only reached me by to-night's post."

"Give it me," said Violet, and she took the letter hastily.

There was no light in the room; but she could see by the light of the moon that it was from Jack.

Oh, how her heart beat, and what joy there was in the beating.

"She'll be better after this, I'll warrant, bless her," said the maid as she discreetly retired.

Violet lit a candle, and hurriedly read what her lover had written. The news the note contained startled her, for it was all so unexpected.

"It may be for the best," she said thoughtfully. "In a year he will return —and then. Ah, Jack, I will say you nay no longer then."

Falling down upon her knees, she lifted up her voice in prayer.

"God protect you, dearest, and bring you back safe to me."

And as she finished speaking, the moonbeams smiled upon her face as if her prayer had been answered.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NICE LITTLE SÉANCE.

THE night of the Princess Birbensky's séance had arrived. There were assembled in her apartments invited guests to the number of five, making with herself and Brown seven sitters. The Princess, as became a Fatalist, had, I might add by way of parenthesis, a great faith in the indivisible number seven.

The company consisted of the Grand Duke, the Grand Duchess, Mrs. Parkinson, a Turkish Pasha, very fat and very rich—Her Highness's latest follower, who had arrived on the scene that very day—and the celebrated African explorer, Dr. Trier. With the exception of the latter, who

attended a séance for the first time, all were more or less believers in Spiritualism, and consequently everything was particularly favourable for a successful "sitting."

The proceedings opened with what in spiritual parlance is called a "dark séance."

To those who are not familiar with this phase of Spiritualism, a brief description of such a séance will doubtless prove of interest.

To begin with, "the sitters" were arranged around a table which stood in the middle of the room, each person being desired to grasp the hand of his neighbour.

Brown too, sat at the table, having the Princess on his left, and Dr. Trier on his right. The lights having been turned out —the sitters waited in breathless expectation for the "spirits" to manifest.

For awhile they sat in the darkness without a sign, when presently the Pasha declared that he felt a cold clammy hand touching him.

"Pray be quiet," whispered the Princess to the Pasha who sat on her right, and who appeared to be greatly alarmed; "the dear spirits will not hurt you." And she gave his hand a gentle squeeze.

The Pasha was reassured, and squeezed her hand in return, and began to think

that dark "séances" were not so bad after all.

For a few moments nothing further occurred, when suddenly the musical-box standing on the table was wound up. It at once began to play, and then, as if carried by invisible hands, it appeared, still playing, to be making a circuit of the room. Now and again it touched the heads of "the sitters," sending a peculiar thrill through them. It is not pleasant to be suddenly touched in the dark by invisible hands, and the Grand Duchess, who was nervous and in ill-health, gave a faint scream.

"Are you holding the medium?" said the Grand Duke, who wore a wig, and was vexed at the liberty taken by the "spirits" in disarranging it.

"For my part, your Imperial Highness," replied the Princess, "I have never let go of his hand;" whilst the explorer, who thought that the hand that he grasped felt singularly soft and clinging for a man's hand, said nothing.

Having made the circuit of the room and set His Imperial Highness's wig irrevocably awry in its course, the musical box fell with a deep thud upon the table, grazing the Pasha's thumb as it did so.

After this there was a pause, during which the "spirits" appeared to be

gathering fresh strength. For presently they took to handling the chairs and throwing them about the room, and the table round which the company sat rocked violently.

Up to this the "spooks" had been silent, but now they found voice, and voices sounded above the table, under the table, and, as it seemed, in all corners of the room; but what they really said no one seemed to understand. "Spirit voices," like baby-talk, are understood only by the initiated.

The voices were followed by the appearance of "spirit lights"—smelling suspiciously of phosphorus—which floated about in the inky darkness.

Mrs. Parkinson thought she heard her husband's voice behind her chair; whilst the Grand Duchess, who had become sufficiently nervous to see anything, declared she saw a face forming itself in the darkness.

So alarmed, in fact, did she become that she called for a light, stating that she could endure the darkness no longer. At this there was a sudden scuffling noise, as if the "spirits," fearful of having the light turned upon them, were hurrying their departure, and Dr. Trier felt his hand raised in the air, and when it came

down again it appeared to him that the hand he held had suddenly become harder and larger.

He said nothing, however, reserving his opinion until afterwards.

The candles being lit, the room presented a scene of the greatest confusion.

Chairs were overturned, books had been removed from the bookshelves, a small table stood upside down in a corner of the room, and the tongs and fire-shovel were thrust up the chimney.

"The spirits, Princess, have made good use of their time," drily remarked Dr. Trier; "and if they can put things straight as readily as they can throw them into disorder, what extremely useful folk they would be about a house. But I suppose it is only a medium who can command their services?"

"Hush," said the Princess, tapping him reprovingly with her fan. "I wouldn't have the medium hear you for the world. He might take offence and refuse to go on with the materialization. These mediums are so very sensitive; and the least adverse influence has a tendency to arrest their powers of mediumship."

"And, Princess, you believe this?" said the explorer, looking at her keenly.

"You must not ask how much I believe. Some is doubtless true, whilst some is possibly false; but anyhow, it is a new sensation. And how, *mon ami*, can I live without a new sensation?" And with a little laugh, she turned to Brown, who had not understood the conversation, which had been carried on in Russian, and complimented him upon the success of the first portion of the séance.

Brown bowed humbly, but inwardly he was flushed with pride.

"I am but an instrument in the hands of the 'spirits,'" he said meekly. "If it is their will that they should manifest through me, I cannot but obey their wishes."

Mrs. Parkinson also warmly thanked the medium for his manifestations; but somehow her words fell flat upon ears which had just drunk in the Princess's neatly-turned phrases.

The Grand Duchess, who had quite recovered from her nervousness, added her thanks; but the Grand Duke, who experienced some difficulty in putting his wig straight, was not inclined to be quite so gracious. He believed in Spiritualism, but this did not prevent him from resenting the liberty taken by the "spirits" with his person; and had he known that

the medium had a hand in the outrage, he would probably have there and then thrown him out of window.

No one likes to have his wig disarranged, much less a Russian Grand Duke; and his Imperial Highness wondered what sort of a spirit it could be who could dare to lay irreverent hands upon his person.

But it has from time to time been proved that "spirits," like mosquitoes, are no respecters of persons, and that they will tickle a king as readily as they will tickle a peasant.

Have you, reader, never heard of the indignity put upon Napoleon III., in the height of his power, by an irreverent spirit?

I relate the story as it was told me by one who claimed to have been an eye-witness of the event.

The Emperor, ever inclined to a belief in the mystical, was the first monarch in Europe to accept the phenomena ascribed to spirit power. To his mind there was much that was possible in this latter-day Spiritualism, which had its origin with two obscure American girls named Fox, some ten years before. He, therefore, when Home, the prince of mediums, arrived in Paris, sought him out in much

the same fashion that monarchs sought the soothsayers of old.

In due course a séance at the Tuileries was arranged.

At this séance many strange things were performed, amongst them the materialization of a "spirit hand." This hand wrote out a message, which his Majesty perused with the deepest concern, for, so it is said, it foreshadowed his future downfall.

The materialization of the hand was followed by the materialization of a foot. To whom the foot belonged no one seemed to know; but it evidently was the foot of some one who had but little respect for the Emperor. For suddenly, and without warning, his Majesty found himself kicked. Where? Well, the last place where a dignified person expects to be kicked.

With the kick the foot immediately disappeared, leaving the Emperor in a state of great indignation.

The irreverent "spirit" was sought for high and low (and it would probably have gone hard with him had he been found), but the search was without avail; and the indignant monarch vented his anger upon the medium, through whom the foot had been "materialized."

* * * * *

The Grand Duke did not express his vexation in words, but he treated Brown with marked coldness the rest of the evening.

In a little while, preparations were made for the light séance, which in reality was light only in name, for a lamp only was left burning, and this was turned so low, that nothing could be very clearly distinguished in the room.

A cabinet had been improvised by a pair of curtains being hung up in a corner of a room, and behind these the medium retired.

Before doing so, however, he arranged the "sitters" in the form of a horse-shoe, each one being strictly enjoined to hold fast to the other's wrist.

This "magnetic chain of hands" is supposed to have an encouraging effect upon the "spirits." In fact, no well-regulated spirit would think of appearing at a séance where his patrons were personally unknown to him, unless this all-essential condition were rigidly observed. There is a good deal of worldly wisdom about the spirits; and it is but natural that they should take every precaution against surprises. For sceptics, unless firmly held on either side by "true believers," have an awkward knack of breaking from the circle and laying violent

hands upon the manifesting "form." Now, it stands to reason that no person, whether in spirit or material form, likes to be violently laid hold of and stripped of his clothes; and the medium is wise to insist that the "sitters" must on no consideration unloose their hands during the séance.[1]

[1] The facility with which a skilful medium can release his hands at a dark séance is very remarkable. I have known a medium to be moving about the room playing the "spirit," whilst the "sitters" have emphatically declared that they have been holding him the whole time. The deception is managed in this way. The "sitters," as I have already pointed out, take seats round a table, each one linking his little finger in that of his neighbour, the medium being held on either side in a similar way. When the lights are turned out, the medium, by a series of convulsive movements, gets his hands and those holding him close together. Then he dexterously releases the little finger of his right hand (or the left, as the case may be) and replaces it with the *forefinger of his left.* With the hand thus free, he can wind up the musical box, manipulate fans, tug ladies' dresses with the lazy-tongs, blow trumpets, and "manifest" generally. To get himself entirely free, a little more care is needed, but the process is precisely the same. The medium draws his imprisoned hand and the hands of the "sitters" on either side of him, still nearer together, then, whilst the attention of every one is distracted by some noise or movement going on in the room, he withdraws his finger, and the two people grasp each other's fingers in the firm belief it is the medium they are holding. Being free, the medium can then proceed about the room at his pleasure, removing this, and overturning that object, tapping this

This position—unless one is sitting between a couple of pretty women who do not object to an occasional magnetic squeeze—in the end becomes exceedingly irksome, and one longs for the freedom of one's hand, if only for a moment.

Well do I remember the first materialization séance I attended.

Long we sat in the dimly-lighted room, waiting for the "spirits" to come. I got impatient, and presently began to yawn. I wished to disengage my right hand to put over my mouth; but the lady who held it pointed out the impropriety of breaking the conditions for such a purpose. Politeness demanded that I should release my hand; but then I had promised to observe the conditions, which strictly forbade my doing anything of the kind.

man on the head, and tickling that lady on the neck, and so on and so on *ad infinitum*. Should some evil-disposed sceptic strike a light meanwhile, his absence from the circle would be ascribed by the faithful to the work of an evil spirit.

In the dark it is almost impossible to tell what it is you feel, and it is astonishing with what ease false sensorial impressions may be produced. It would be impossible, of course, to exhibit in the light the manifestations produced under such conditions, and the reader will readily understand why the mediums find that darkness helps "the conditions." What "spirit," indeed, would run the risk of appearing in the light, when he can do his little "turn" with comparative safety in the dark?

I was on the point several times of asking the "spirits" if I might release my hand for that purpose; but it being my first sitting, I was rather shy, and I hesitated to trouble them about such a matter, so I gaped on unchecked. Gaping, as every one knows, is contagious, and presently I found all the sitters gaping one against the other.

By-and-by my nose began to itch, and I longed to scratch it. But how? I dared not loose either hand, and I could not very well take the hands of the ladies, who held me, up to my nose whilst I scratched it. The position, as one may very well imagine, speedily became intolerable. I made frantic efforts to rub my nose upon my coat—but I never seemed to hit the right spot—whilst the ladies who held me prisoner wondered what ailed me.

"You seem very restless," at length remarked one of the ladies; "are you nervous?"

"Nervous, no, madam," I replied in a whisper, "but" (and I sank my voice still lower), "to tell the truth, I want to scratch my nose."

The murder was out at last; and the ladies could hardly restrain themselves from laughing outright.

"It is no laughing matter," I replied, somewhat sharply, for at that moment the

irritation was greater than ever, "but what am I to do? You won't let me loose my hands for fear of disturbing the conditions; and I can't ask any one to scratch my nose for me. But if you don't mind my scratching it with your hand in mine, I shall be extremely obliged; for, to tell the truth, I really can't stand it much longer."

Neither of the ladies offered any objection to this; and so hand in hand—now with the left and then with the right—I scratched that unfortunate nose of mine every time it itched, which was pretty often.

It was not till some time after Brown had retired behind the improvised cabinet that the "spirits" gave any sign of being present; and the sitters became wearied of waiting. The Pasha, even, so far forgot himself as to go to sleep, and his snores enlivened the monotony of the proceedings.

The Grand Duke manifested his impatience by tapping his foot upon the carpet, whilst Dr. Trier looked as if he longed to go to the cabinet, and drag the "spirits" from their hiding-place.

Mrs. Parkinson alone looked serene. She was used to waiting for the ghosts to walk.

It was the practice of Brown to keep his company waiting as long as possible, in order to raise their expectancy to the utmost.

Presently the curtains shook tremulously, and what appeared to be a hand was thrust between them. It was a small hand, and, from what could be seen of it in the dim light, it seemed to be that of a woman.

The Grand Dutchess gave a little start, and the Pasha, who was gently nudged by the Princess, who sat next to him, awoke with a grunt, and gazed with blinking eyes at the moving hand.

A little later the curtains were drawn further apart, and there, shining with a strange lustre, stood the spirit-form of a woman.

The apparition was effectively produced, and it greatly impressed the company, with the exception of Dr. Trier, who wondered where the medium secreted the material with which the form was clothed.

He could understand how the shining raiment was produced, for far away in Central Africa, he had frequently awed the natives with luminous paint effects; and he had no doubt but that the medium had attired himself in a muslin dress smeared with one of the many luminous compositions with which he was familiar.

But how did he make up the face and the hands, and where did he secrete the muslin and the rest of the paraphernalia? This puzzled the learned traveller, who, although clear-headed enough to understand that the shining form between the curtains was none other than Brown, the medium, rigged out in "spirit apparel," he was not sufficiently conversant with the tricks of Spiritualism to explain how the "spirits" were made up.

For ways that are dark and tricks that are vain, the professional medium beats the heathen Chinee hollow.

I have seen a male medium with the outward appearance of an evangelist, and a female with eyes that looked too heavenly to belong to any one of this earth, play upon the feelings of their victims with a cold-blooded cruelty that the most hardened ruffian would probably have been ashamed of.

With respect to the secretion of the material which goes to make up the "spirits," there are many ways of doing it. When the medium is not searched previous to retiring for the purpose of communing with his "controls," there is nothing easier than to stow away in his pockets the necessary trappings. It does not take much to clothe a spirit; and as

his or her apparel is made of the lightest material, such apparel occupies but little space.

Wadding is extensively used by the mediums; and it is perfectly astounding how a few strips of that material arranged on the face will in an instant transform a human being into a spook.

Wadding—simple wadding—produces a face of deathly whiteness, while by adding a little rouge a more life-like effect can be obtained. If the spirit of an Asiatic is desired, the wadding has simply to be dyed the necessary colour, whilst black wadding serves for the production of a face of negro type. The strips of wadding can be readily secreted, and a little gum smeared upon the face will hold them fast.

Let any one—the most material individual in existence—arrange his face in this way, put on a wig, cover his clothes with muslin, and walk suddenly into a dimly lighted room in which people are sitting, and note the effect.

In the first place, no one would recognize him—so absolutely can one's personality in this way be disguised—and, secondly, every one with supernatural leanings would in the moment believe that he was in truth a visitor from the other world.

Sometimes it happens that the mediums

are rigorously searched before they retire, and every precaution taken against their stowing away the necessary disguises; but even then they frequently manage to elude the vigilance of their searchers. Moreover, mediums, who have been stripped down to their shirts, have been known to materialize "spirits," although the possibility of the material with which the forms were clothed being secreted about their persons was entirely out of the question.

But then they have had other means of working the oracle. At the last moment a friendly hand has passed in the "stuff" (as it is technically called by the mediums), or the medium has contrived to previously secrete the said "stuff" in the cabinet, or within easy reach of it.

I once knew a medium who insisted upon being searched before undertaking any materialization, and no matter how carefully he was overhauled, he never failed to produce his "spirits" in due course. It was evident that he had not the material about him, and it certainly was not hid in the cabinet, and it was a profound mystery where he obtained it from. It puzzled me at first, I must confess, but eventually I succeeded in solving the mystery.

It was worked in this way. The medium

having been searched, he retired to the cabinet which was bare of everything. There he, according to his statement, lay on the floor in a trance, whilst the "forms" evolved themselves out of his "materio-spiritual atoms."

"I ought to have something to lie on," he would say, looking around his room. "Do you mind handing me that fur hearth-rug?" and the fur hearthrug was accordingly handed to him.

Now this rug, which was exactly like any other rug, had a false bottom, and in it were secreted the muslin and the rest of the spirit paraphernalia. Any one handling it would never for a moment have had his suspicions aroused. The muslin, &c., were so carefully packed, that they felt like ordinary stuffing, and the bottom containing them appeared to be firmly stitched, yet by pulling a thread, it opened immediately, and was as readily made taut again.

The late Sergeant Cox used to tell an amusing story about the wiles of a lady medium.

This lady was great at "materializations," and no matter how carefully she was searched by a committee of females previous to the séance, she never failed to find dresses for the spirits she "materialized."

This puzzled the learned Sergeant, and he set to work to solve the mystery. At length he was successful; for acting upon a suspicion which he had ventured to suggest—with bated breath, be it said—a more thorough search than any previously made was effected; and the spirit garments were discovered.

But where?
In her bustle? No!
In her boots? No!
In the folds of her hair? No.
In her stays? No.
They were in her drawers!

* * * *

Brown, it will be seen, was not searched; and he, of course, would have no difficulty in secreting the requisite "stuff" about him.

The female he materialized represented no one in particular, it being simply one of his many "controls."

She did not stay very long; and was quickly followed by the form of a negro.

This was Brown's favourite "control;" and the most glowing accounts had been printed in the spiritualistic journals concerning his materialization.

"Explain, ye sceptics," would shriek the scribes, "this most perfect and marvellous manifestation. Here is a medium who is

white, and yet produces a spirit that is black. Here is a medium who knows nothing of the languages of the Dark Continent, materializing the form of an African who speaks his mother tongue. There is no jugglery in this. A white man cannot make himself a black man; neither can he speak in a tongue of which he is absolutely ignorant.

"No, it proves that Spiritualism is universal; it proves that when a man is a medium, there is practically no limit, under given conditions, to his mediumship, and that he can control alike the spirit of the white man, the red man, the yellow man, or the black man."

Brown, as I have already said, was exceedingly proud of his materialization of this negro; he was one of his stock spirits, and he had managed to produce him to perfection.

The contrast between the lady spirit in her shining white raiment and the ebony black form which followed was, needless to say, very striking; and, from an artistic point of view, the change was neatly worked.

The negro did not hide himself in the folds of the curtain, but briskly stepped forward into the middle of the room. There was nothing shy about him, and he

seemed to be as much at home in the Princess's apartments, as on his native heath.

He grinned horribly, and gesticulated violently, and then commenced his war-dance. This, to do him credit, he managed very well, and the Pasha was so impressed, that he could hardly restrain himself from applauding outright. To the spiritualistic mind there was a world of conviction in this war-dance. It was, they argued, the very thing that the spirit of a black man would be expected to do on being materialized.

Who ever heard of a white man doing a war-dance, or chanting a barbaric song of victory? Ergo, it must be a genuine negro that the medium materialized.

Argument with these rabid believers was quite out of the question, and they positively refused to listen to anything one might advance to the contrary.

Amongst "sitters" who knew absolutely nothing of the various African dialects, the gibberish of Brown's negro passed muster well enough; but directly the "spirit" came in contact with any one who was conversant with the Africans and their languages, it, to use an Americanism, at once "dried up."

This was the case on the present

occasion, when Dr. Trier opened up a conversation with the ebony spook.

He tried him in Arabic, in Zulu, in Soudanese, in the various dialects of the Congo, and I don't know what else, but without succeeding in drawing from him more than a few unintelligible grunts.

Perhaps the spook was averse to answering leading questions. Anyhow, he soon retired within himself as it were, and making a gesture of farewell, he took his departure.

After this a dead silence reigned, broken only by the deep breathing of the Pasha, who had again fallen asleep.

Some minutes later knocks were heard, which meant, the Princess said, that the "spirits" wished to communicate with the "sitters."

"Are you here, dear spirits?" asked the Princess, in a gentle tone.

Three raps—*Yes!*

"What do you want?"

Five raps—*Alphabet!*

"Does your name begin with A."

One rap—*No!*

"With B?"

One rap.

"With C?"

One rap.

"With D?"

One rap.
"With E?"
One rap.
"With F?"
Three raps—*Yes!*

And other questions being put, it was discovered that the spirit's name was Fatima, and that she wished to communicate with the Pasha.

The Pasha, whom the raps had awaked, trembled violently at this, for there flashed across his memory the vision of one moonless night when a fair inmate of his harem, without shrift or warning, had been consigned to the Bosphorus.

In considerable agitation he expressed his disinclination to converse with the young lady; and the Princess, thinking that the conversation might lead to an unpleasant termination, wished "the spirit" good-night.

Fatima at once took the hint and retired.

Brown's "controls" were noted for their discretion; and they, as far as possible, endeavoured to conform to the wishes of the "sitters." Some "forms" are very slow at taking a hint; not so Brown's.

With the disappearance of Fatima, the séance terminated, and Brown, having

allowed himself sufficient time to stow away his disguises, rapped out a message to the effect that the candles should be lit.

This was done, and on going to the cabinet, the company found the medium lying in an assumed trance. He speedily came to, however, and in answer to the congratulations of the Princess, disclaimed all cognizance of what had taken place.

"I have been in a deep trance," he said; "and whilst I am in that condition, I have no knowledge of the use the dear spirits choose to make of me." And he gave a long-drawn sigh, as much as to say, "Yours the pleasure, mine the pain."

In a little while the guests departed, with the exception of Dr. Trier.

The Princess shook the medium graciously by the hand on parting.

When Brown held out his hand to Dr. Trier, the great traveller looked at it disdainfully for a moment, then, taking it somewhat roughly, he scanned the palm in much the same manner as a fortune-teller. Then dropping it abruptly, he turned his back on the astonished medium, who wondered what it all meant.

He did not remain long in ignorance.

"Well, *mon ami*," said the Princess to

Dr. Trier, when they had all gone, "what do you think of my medium?"

The explorer merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Come, doctor, confess that you have never seen anything one-half so wonderful. You, even, who have seen the magic of the witch-doctors in Africa, the medicine-men in America, and the Fakirs of India, have, I firmly believe, witnessed nothing equal to this. Now confess that you are beaten;" and she gave him a bewitching smile.

"I came, Princess, to see a spirit, and I found a dressed-up mortal; I came to see a medium, and I found an unprincipled knave."

"These are harsh words, *mon ami*. Explain yourself."

"That is not difficult. You see this?" and the doctor produced from his pocket a small root of a yellowish colour."

"Yes; but what of it?"

"You shall see." He wetted his hand, and rubbed the root on the spot, producing a vivid red mark.

"Now, madam," he continued, "we will examine the handle of the musical box. Please catch hold of it."

She did so.

"Now, *ma princesse*, look at your hand."

It was stained with red.

"What does this mean?" she said in considerable surprise, eyeing the red stains on her white palm dubiously.

"It means that when the lights were blown out, I rubbed this root on the handle of the musical-box, with the object of seeing whose hand it was that turned on the music.

"The hand was the medium's. It is redder even than yours, *ma belle princesse*."

"You terrible man," replied the Princess, after a pause; "and how cruel of you not to tell me that the handle was dyed. Will it come off?" and she looked very much concerned at the marks on her hand, which seemed to grow the brighter with rubbing.

"Oh yes, they won't last for ever. They will probably go away in a month," said the doctor grimly.

"In a month; how horrible!" she said.

"One can't touch pitch, madam, without being defiled," he replied, with a laugh; "and if you dabble in Spiritualism—"

"I will have no more of it," she broke in impetuously, stamping her foot in a pretty rage on the floor. "I am quite

cured," she added, caring less for the stains on her character than those on her hand. "To be streaked with red like a sheep's back for a month! Faugh! it is disgusting."

"Then you have done with your last sensation?"

"Quite;" and she looked with increased disgust at her stained hand.

"I am glad of that. For my part, however, I have not yet done with it."

"How so?"

"Why, I purpose laying the matter at once before the police."

CHAPTER XV.

BAD NEWS.

VIOLET, as will be seen, did not attend the séance in the Princess's apartments.

She was asked, but she declined, and her mother, who, like most British matrons, dearly loved foreign aristocracy, was exceedingly annoyed thereat.

"What can you be thinking about, Violet?" she said, "It is not every day one has the opportunity of being a guest of a Princess, and of sitting in the same room with royalty.

"It is simply this, mother," replied the

girl frankly, "I don't like the Princess. I am sure she is not a good woman, and she merely asks us because" (she was going to say that "horrid man," but checked herself) "Mr. Brown is with us. She hasn't otherwise the remotest interest in either of us; and as for the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess, they are very amiable folk, I have no doubt, but what possible interest can they have in us? It is the medium, or rather his manifestations, they want to see; and if we go, we shall be of no more moment than the chairs in the room. You will excuse me, mother, but I really do not care about this kind of thing, and my presence would probably have a bad influence on the spirits."

This she said with a somewhat provoking smile, for with the receipt of her lover's note, all her good spirits had returned; and had her mother not been too annoyed at her refusal to attend the séance, she must have noticed it. Since her arrival in Franzensbad, Violet had been very quiet and reserved—I might almost say depressed—and such a thing as a smile had rarely been seen upon her face. But all this was changed now, and she was herself again.

"I will not excuse you," replied her

mother indignantly, walking out of the room.

Although she had no interest in the séance, the truth was Violet wished to be alone. Her thoughts were too full of her sweetheart to have place for anything else. She had despatched a cablegram to him at once on receipt of his note, and had already sent a short letter ; but this evening she had set aside for writing to him at length.

Whilst the séance was going on in the apartments below, Violet sat in her room writing this letter. It took her nearly two hours, and it was close upon ten o'clock when she had finished. She gave him full particulars of everything that had taken place since they last met, and begged him to be of good heart.

"You are certain of me, my darling, and I am certain of you," she wrote. "The twelve months will soon go by, and then we shall meet again, never to part. May God protect you on your long journey. I pray this ever so much. Not that I am afraid, dearest, for I would not have you think me a coward. But it is a long journey that you are taking, and one never knows what may happen. But nothing can happen to you, dear. How can it? For what should I do without you? I am

afraid I am very foolish, but don't mind me. I can't help being a little anxious—just a little."

About Brown she said scarcely anything.

"I seldom see him now," she wrote; "he is very busy giving séances, and I avoid him as much as possible. I really can't think that he would be so wicked as to steal our letters, for what good could they do him? It is possible that they went astray—at least, I would rather think so. For, bad as the man is, I cannot believe he would stoop so low as to do such a cruel and cowardly thing as that. I could never look the wretch in the face again if I believed him guilty. I will post my letters myself in future, and perhaps it would be better to address your letters to the post office at Arlington. There at least they will be safe. The postmaster is such a dear good soul, and he won't think it strange of my having just one letter addressed there. Besides, mother gets so cross every time a letter comes to the house from you.

"I do not know how much longer we stay here, but perhaps another fortnight. It is a very pretty place, and I am very content. And your letter has made me, oh! so happy."

The letter finished, she slipped in some sprays of forget-me-nots, and sealed it up.

Then she went out on the balcony. It was a glorious night. The stars were bright in the heavens, and the great moon shone with a soft light upon the avenues of trees beneath her window.

"The same moon that looks down on me will look upon him," she thought as she gazed out on the starry night.

"If one could only send a message by the stars," she said; and at that moment, as if in answer to her wish, a star shot across the sky, leaving a trail of fire in its course.

"That is a good omen," she added, gazing at the spot where the ball of flame lost itself in the blue of the sky. "Ah, Jack, if you only think of me as I think of you. But then you do, I know that. So, good-night, dearest, and God be with you."

Then, with a last look at the moon, which a dark cloud was slowly obscuring, she left the balcony and entered her room.

Soon she was undressed and in bed; and in a little while was asleep.

How sweet, how happy she looked as she lay there with just a glimmer of the moon upon her face!

Gradually the darkness of the cloud

stole away the moon's light, and with it the young girl's peace.

From the realms of delight her fancies travelled to the regions of despair.

She dreamt she was standing on a cliff watching a ship in the distance. It was bright moonlight, and everything around her was distinctly visible. The moon was reflected in the sea, which was as smooth as a sheet of glass. "How beautiful it must be to glide along like that!" she thought, watching the movement of the handsome little steamer. "How happy Jack must be!"

Then all at once, without warning, the moon clouded over, and the sea lashed itself into a fury. The wind blew, and the rain came down. She felt almost blown from where she stood, whilst the rain drenched her in torrents, but she could not tear herself away. She felt she must look in the direction of the ship, which was no longer visible.

The thunder rolled, and the great streaks of lightning played upon the jagged rocks above her. At her feet the waves surged and dashed, and the wind went shrieking by her, dashing her with spray.

Presently a flash of light opened the darkness of the sea to her eyes. It showed her the ship but a few yards away,

being driven rapidly on the rocks. She tried to shriek and warn the people whose white faces were for a moment visible, but voice failed her.

Then, with a loud crash, she heard the vessel strike the rocks, followed by the shrieks of those on board.

A little while and all was still, save for the moaning of the wind and the surge of the great waves against the rocks.

But what is that? It is not the wind; no, that has ceased. It is the cry of a human being. She peered into the darkness, but could see nothing. Then the heavens flashed, and for a moment made things visible around her. The waves were breaking over the ship, and casting their foam high up on the cliff's side. Beneath her she saw a man clinging to a rugged piece of rock. She could not see his face; but the next flash disclosed it to her.

It was her lover.

He called to her, but she could not answer him. He asked her to help him, but she could not move. All she could do was to hold out her hand, which he was unable to reach, and to watch with agonized eyes his struggles to hold to the rock.

She saw him slipping back into the black angry trough of the sea, and yet could not move a step to save him.

She was as one paralyzed; and the wind as it howled through the crevices in the rocks, seemed like the voices of fiends mocking her.

Then all at once there stood by her side a figure in black. It was Brown, the medium; only his face was that of a devil rather than that of a human being.

"I can save him," he said.

"Save him and God will bless you," she said; and as she spoke, there came a loud crash of thunder, and the figure appeared to disappear in the darkness.

But he was at her side again in a moment.

"Yes, I can save him," he repeated. "But all the favour must not be on one side. If I save him, you must promise to be mine."

His voice grated in her ears, and his eyes were as balls of green flame as they looked into hers, whilst the hand he laid upon her wrist burnt her as with fire.

She tried to pray for guidance, but the words would not form themselves on her tongue; and a great despair took possession of her.

By her side stood the malignant form of the medium, and beneath was the pale, despairing face of her lover. She looked at the sky overhead. It was as a pall.

"God will not let him die thus," she thought. And at that moment the dark clouds lifted a little, and a gleam of light shot from the moon.

"God has heard," she exclaimed joyfully. "He will help us."

And she awoke.

* * * *

When Violet came down to breakfast the next morning, she looked so pale and worried, that her mother at once noticed the change in her from the evening before.

"Why, Violet," she said, "how pale you look; ain't you well?"

"Nothing," replied she, somewhat abstractedly. "I did not sleep well; and I had such a horrid dream."

Brown watched her through his spectacles.

"I wonder if she is telling the truth," he thought. Liar himself, he believed every one else to be a liar; and he could hardly conceive that a mere dream could make such an impression on her. He had noticed the change that had taken place in her the last few days, and shrewd man that he was, he at once concluded that she, in spite of his vigilance, had heard from her lover, and now he believed she had received news of an unsatisfactory character—hence her depression.

Violet left her breakfast untouched; and her mother failed to induce her to eat anything.

"Don't trouble about me, mother, I shall be all right soon; one can't," she added, with a forced laugh, "expect to be quite the thing after a bad night." And at the remembrance of her dream, she shuddered.

Presently Brown, who was reading the *Times*, gave an exclamation of surprise.

Both the women turned and looked at him.

On his face was a well-assumed expression of horror.

"How terrible," he said.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Parkinson.

"Why, a shipwreck."

"A shipwreck?" repeated Violet, starting violently. "Where, what? Let me see it."

She took the paper from his hands.

One look was sufficient. There, in large type, amongst the foreign news, was the following despatch:—

"WRECK OF THE *Placentia*.

"St. John's, Newfoundland.

"September 4.

"Our St. John's correspondent telegraphs:

'News of the wreck of Mr. Watson's

yacht, the *Placentia*, off the east coast of Newfoundland, reached St. John's, last night. The wreck was sighted by the mail boat, the *Penguin*. It is feared that every person on board has been lost. Mr. Watson was very popular in the island, where he has great mining interests, and the news has caused a profound sensation."

"'LATER.

'No bodies of those on board the ill-fated yacht have yet been recovered; and there is a possibility that all, or at least some of them, may have been saved. A search party is being sent out, but a dense fog prevails along the whole coast, and until this lifts, very little can be done. The portion of the coast where the wreck took place is, save for a wandering band of Micmacs, wholly uninhabited. Further news is awaited with the greatest anxiety.'"

Violet did not cry out when she read this; she seemed stupefied with horror.

"Violet, what is it?" said her mother; "why do you look like that?"

There was no response. The poor girl's lips were hot and parched, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth; and her large, tearless eyes were fixed on the paper in front of her as one in a trance.

"Violet! Violet! what is it?" called out her mother in grave concern. "Don't stare so horribly—say something, or I shall think you have gone mad."

She jumped from her seat, and put her hand on her daughter's shoulder.

That touch saved Violet's reason. In no way could the dread news have been broken more abruptly, and its terrible suddenness produced a shock like unto death.

With the touch of her mother's hand she was brought back to consciousness. But she did not speak. She merely pointed to the telegram.

"Yes, dear," said her mother softly, "It is very shocking; but how does it concern you?"

"He, mother, was on board that ship; and he is lost." The great tears filled her eyes, and she clutched her mother's arm with a convulsive sob.

"This is terrible," replied her mother, forgetting in a moment all her animosity to the young man. "I did not know he had left England," she added, "you did not tell me."

"We drove him away. We are guilty of his death. If I had married him as he wished, he would not have gone. It was a cursed day when that medium came to

our house," and she looked at Brown in a manner that made him blanch with fear.

"It may not be so bad, after all," urged her mother soothingly. "You see there is hope."

"There is no hope this side of the grave. I saw it all in my dream last night. I saw him sinking, and I was unable to stretch a hand to save him. I, who would have given my life for his."

"Violet, dear, do not look like that; you frighten me. Do be calm."

"Calm! how can I be calm when he whom I loved lies mangled on the rocks? What does it matter if I go mad? Is there anything left to live for?" and she gave a deep, piteous moan.

"God help me—what shall I do?"

She buried her face in her hands and wept.

CHAPTER XVI.

BROWN RECEIVES NOTICE TO QUIT.

Dr. Trier was a man of his word, and he duly lodged a complaint against Brown at the Polizei Bureau.

The Police Commissioner was inclined to issue a warrant for the medium's arrest;

and it would have gone hard with him had he done so, for in the eyes of the Austrian law a spirit medium is not the superior person that he is in England and America.

In England and in the United States a "medium" is subject to no interference at the hands of the law, and—so long as he does not actually defraud the credulous of their money—may carry on his nefarious practices unmolested.

Not so in Austria. I question if a professional medium, with no visible means of obtaining a livelihood beyond his mediumship, would be allowed to reside in that country; and if he desired to give a public exhibition, I question very much whether the authorities would grant him the necessary permission.

The notorious Dr. Slade was requested to leave the country, as soon as he arrived in it; and after Bastian's *fiasco*, a great prejudice has existed in the minds of the Police authorities with respect to these spiritualistic worthies.

Bastian had the honour of giving a séance before the Crown Prince Rudolph in the palace of the Archduke John.

At this séance he, having retired into an inner room, caused a ghost to appear in the salon where the Imperial "sitters" were assembled.

The Crown Prince did not believe in "spirits," and he was anxious to ascertain what this ghostly visitor was made of. So, immediately the geist entered the salon, he caused the door through which he entered—for it was a *he* ghost—to close with a spring, thus shutting off all communication with the medium who was supposed to be in a trance in the adjoining room.

Alas, poor ghost!

He took this separation from his earthly control most unkindly. He started violently as the snap of the spring struck his ears, and then commenced to dash wildly about the room. Finding escape hopeless, he huddled himself up in a corner. In the dim light it appeared as if he would dematerialize and disappear through the cracks in the floor; but he was much too solid.

The Imperial party proceeded to inspect him, and found him to be Bastian masquerading in spirit attire.

The "spirit's" terror was piteous, and he took no consolation in the Crown Prince's assurance that no harm would come to him; but proceeded at the first opportunity to make a bolt of it, *leaving his boots behind* in his haste.

Needless to say he did not return to

claim these boots, but took an early train across the frontier.

The Police authorities at Franzensbad were not disposed to allow Brown to similarly escape, and they were for having him arrested without delay. But Dr. Trier was opposed to this, and suggested that they should instead give him notice to leave the town at once. This they reluctantly consented to do, and an order was duly drawn up for Brown's expulsion from Franzensbad.

Had Dr. Trier been a person of less importance, the milder course would not have been adopted, but the learned *savant* was one to be listened to, and they accepted his advice.

"It will never do," said Dr. Trier, "to make a case of it; for their Imperial Highnesses (referring to the Russian Grand Duke and Grand Duchess) would strongly resent having their names mixed up in such an affair.

"The best way is to give him his *congé*, and that as soon as possible. He, as you very properly say, richly deserves to be punished; but it would be impossible to let the case come into the courts without causing a grave scandal—which is the very thing one wishes to avoid. To send him out of the country before he has had time

to collect his ill-gotten gains will probably be punishment enough."

Brown had no idea of what was in store for him.

On the contrary, he was singularly jubilant this morning. Everything promised so well. Alston was dead, and all anxiety on his score was removed. His position with Mrs. Parkinson was unassailable, and a little scheme, which he purposed setting in action at the earliest opportunity, would probably secure him that lady's hand and fortune. And in the event of failure in this direction, he still had another string to his bow, which he flattered himself he would, when the time came, twang with effect.

He was busy counting over the money he had received for his various séances in Franzensbad, and making a note of other sums still due to him, including the Princess Birbensky's 1000 francs, when a sharp knock sounded on the door of his room.

He bundled the notes and gold into a drawer, and shouted for his visitor to come in.

The door opened, and there entered an officer of police.

The sight was not a welcome one; and Brown's knees visibly trembled.

"Are you Herr Brown, the English spirit medium?" asked the officer.

Brown nodded. He was too agitated to speak, instinctively guessing that the officer's visit boded him no good.

"So you are the man I want."

"What can I do for you?" gasped the medium.

"You will put your things together at once," was the reply, "for in two hours you will have to leave Franzensbad."

"Have to leave Franzensbad in two hours?" slowly repeated Brown, as if he had not heard the message aright.

"Yes, here is the order for your expulsion;" and he handed him a paper signed by the Polizei Commission.

"*Sie werden angewiesen, das Gebiet von Franzensbad binnen Zwei Stunden zu Verlassen.*

Polizei Commissär."

Brown read slowly; and he knew sufficient German to be able to make out its meaning.

"I do not understand it," he said huskily. "What have I done? why am I sent away?"

"This is the order. My business is to see that it is delivered and duly carried out. I am not here to give explanations," was the brusque reply, "and," added the

officer, "you only waste time in arguing the matter. In two hours you are to leave; and if you are wise, you won't be found in Franzensbad after that time. You will be seen to the station and put into the train which leaves at two o'clock; and if you have any business to transact, you had better see to it at once, for you haven't much time to lose."

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" groaned Brown, completely losing his head.

"That is your affair, not mine," was the cold reply.

"But I can't be ready in time. I have several outstanding accounts to collect, and I haven't a single thing packed;" and he cast his eye despairingly around the room, which was in great disorder. "Can't you," he added, "give me to the next train?"

"No!" said the officer, "your stay in Franzensbad is limited to the time specified; and you may think yourself lucky in being allowed to leave so soon. You have got more than an hour," he added, looking at his watch, "and it won't take you that long to put your things together, whilst the 'spirits' have not, I presume, a very extensive wardrobe to pack."

The notion that if he did not leave by

the train specified, he might be detained in Austria for an indefinite period, acted like a spur upon Brown; and he bundled his effects together with all haste.

But the remembrance that there were several sums of money owing him, and that he would have to leave without the Princess's cheque troubled him sorely.

"Had I but known," he said to himself, as he wrapped a pair of boots in a spirit dress of white muslin, and broke a corner off a waxen face as he endeavoured to press it into an over-filled Gladstone bag, "I would have had the money at the time. Now I shall lose it all." And he groaned aloud.

By the time he had got his last shirt squeezed into his dressing-case, the officer returned, and bade him accompany him to the railway station.

Brown asked for permission to say a few words to Mrs. Parkinson, but was peremptorily refused.

"Your time is up," said the officer, "and the carriage is ready outside. Come."

"Tell the English lady and her daughter to meet me at Dresden," said Brown in a whisper, slipping a florin in the hand of the waiter as he was going downstairs; "they will soon find out what has happened."

A quarter of an hour later Brown was speeding on his way towards the German frontier, in an anything but a complacent frame of mind.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHERE AM I?

It was early morn. The sun had arisen a little more than an hour, and the first signs of insect and bird life were in the air.

The scene is a forest in Newfoundland.

In an open space there are pitched several wigwams, and by the smoking camp-fire one sees that the inhabitants have already been astir. A little later some dusky forms emerge from the silent forest with game they have just shot. They replenish the fire and prepare the morning meal.

The flap of one of the tents standing a stone's throw from the rest is thrown aside, and the figure of a man stands in the opening. He gives some orders to the men, which are at once obeyed, and then returns within.

We follow him.

Inside, lying on a couch of moss and covered by a musk-ox robe, is a man. He

is not red like those we have just seen, for the bare arm which he tosses restlessly about is white. The face, too, is white—deadly white, as of that of a sick man.

The morning sun streams through the opening in the *tepee*, and falls upon the form that lies there. Then do we see who it is.

It is Alston.

He is the only white man there, and of the others who were on board the ill-fated *Placentia* there is no trace.

When the vessel struck the ridge of rock, all was confusion. In the dense fog which prevailed, it was impossible to tell where they were, and it was some time before they decided what course to pursue.

The vessel was stuck fast, without any prospect of moving her, and it was deemed best to remain where they were until the fog lifted.

But in the night there came on a storm; and they were afraid the vessel would go to pieces. It was, therefore, decided to take to the boats.

Mr. Watson, who was convinced that his hour was come, was unwilling to leave the ship.

"I will remain here alone," he said. "It is better so. Why should I bring my own fate on you? If I go in the boat, I shall

be drowned all the same, and my presence may cause you disaster also."

But no one would hear of this; and "the King" was persuaded to take a seat in the boat. He did this most reluctantly, for in his heart he was sure that he could not escape the fate which had been foreshadowed in his dream.

Alston was the last to get ready to leave the ship. At the moment he was descending her side, a big wave struck her, and she gave a fearful lurch. He lost his hold, and made a spring for the boat, but it had been torn away, and he fell into the surging waters below. And his despairing cry was the last thing the boat's crew heard as they were hurried through the fog on the restless waves.

Alston was a good swimmer, but his skill availed him but little. He could not combat with the roaring waters. He found himself tossed on this side and on that, now sucked under, and again rising. Finally his hand grasped a ledge of rock: he clung to it with all the despair of a drowning man. The waves beat against him, and surged over him, but still he clung there. His fingers were cut to the bone, and his body badly bruised, yet he did not release his grasp. But it was merely a question of time how long he

could hold out, and every moment he found himself growing weaker. He tried to drag himself higher on the rock, but his efforts were unavailing. Then he found his strength giving way, and, with a prayer on his lips, he prepared to die. But at that moment a huge wave struck him and lifted him high on the bed of rock. He fell bruised and stunned, and lay there as one dead.

In the morning the fog lifted, and a wandering band of Micmacs saw the wreck of the ship, and their curiosity being excited, they approached it. It gave forth no sign of life, and they concluded that all had either been drowned or had escaped. They were preparing to return to the land, when the eagle eye of their chief saw something lying on a rock some distance ahead. He knew it was the body of a man, and, connecting it with the wreck, he at once made for the spot.

There they found Alston. He was quite still; and, in the first moment, the redskins thought he was dead. But on a closer examination they found he still breathed, although he was severely bruised and shaken, and stiff from exposure.

They carried him to the shore, and tended him gently; and their chief, who

was skilled in the primary branches of surgery, bound up his wounds. There happily was nothing broken, although he had received several severe contusions. But in the course of the day, fever set in, and his life hung upon a thread.

They moved him some distance in the interior, where they had their camp, away from the chill mists of the sea; and the medicine-man doctored him with physic made from certain herbs. But even with all the old man's skill and the power of the simple drugs employed, Alston would never have recovered had it not been for the unremitting attendance of the chief's daughter, La-ki-wa; or, the Star that Shines.

La-ki-wa had been born in the forest when the evening star was bright in the heavens—hence her name. The light of the star seemed to glisten on the face of the new-born babe, and her parents accepted the sign as a good omen.

She was an admirable nurse, and had he been everything to her on earth, she could not have ministered to him more tenderly.

La-ki-wa was sixteen. She had all an Indian maiden's freshness, and suppleness of body, but there was a refinement about her not often met with among the

daughters of the red skin. She looked like a free child of the forest, with a veneer of the white man's civilization. In her early childhood she had lived in Halifax, and had been educated in one of the missionary schools; but all the while she had been like a lark confined in a gilded cage. Unable to longer bear the restraints of town life, she had fled one night and joined her father and his tribe in their wanderings, taking her learning and many of the pale-face's ways with her.

La-ki-wa was beautiful with the beauty of a young fawn. Her eyes were large and lustrous, her nose was exquisitely chiselled, and her mouth, although somewhat large, was delicately formed.

Her jet black hair was not greased and plaited, after the fashion of the women of her tribe, but fell in graceful waves down her back.

She wore a red flannel tunic, trimmed with silver fox fur; her legs were covered with a kind of trowser made of tanned leather, and her feet were encased in bear-skin moccasins. Round her neck was a necklace composed of thirteen nuggets of pure gold, threaded together with a strip of deer's hide. Loosely thrown over her shoulders was a blanket of English manufacture.

At the moment the reader is given a glimpse of the interior of the *tepee*, La-ki-wa was not there; she was out in the forest.

A few minutes later, however, she emerged from the dark depths of the forest and stood in front of the wigwam, her moccasins wet with the morning dew. A rich flush was on her cheeks, and her luxurious hair was tossed wildly about her neck. In her hand she carried a bunch of wild flowers and a few herbs with reddish roots.

Standing thus, she looked the embodiment of fresh dewy morn.

Lifting the flap of the *tepee*, she slid off her trailing blanket and entered.

"How is it with the stranger?" she said to her father in her native tongue.

"The danger is past," he replied; "the Great Spirit has been pleased to smile upon him, and he journeys not to the land of shadows."

"It is well, it is well," and her large lustrous eyes lit with a great joy.

"Does he speak?" she asked.

"He speaks," said the chief, "but as the thunder's voice far away in the clouds; and I know not what he says."

"The sun has risen and gone to rest

seven times since we found him, my father, and his talk all these days has been that of a child. Will he never speak with the tongue of a brave?"

"The sickness has left him now, and he will see with clear eyes, and talk with loud voice. In a little while—it cannot be long."

At that moment Alston turned on his couch. He shivered a little, and made a movement as if to rise. Then he opened his eyes a little, but the light dazzled him, and he shut them again. He made another effort, but his gaze was that of a blind man. At length his eyes got accustomed to the light, although everything around him seemed blurred and confused.

"Where am I?" he said in a feeble voice, gazing bewilderingly at the pair who stood by his side. These were the first intelligible words that had escaped his lips for more than a week.

The chief put his finger to his lips and shook his head, as if to imply that he did not understand what he said.

"Where am I?" repeated the young man. "Who are you?"

"You safe—good—very good," replied the chief, with difficulty spelling out the words. "Me Tall Pine—me Redskin,"

and the old brave with a deep grunt, lapsed into silence.

"And you?" queried Alston, looking at the young girl, whose eyes were fixed sympathetically upon him.

"I am La-ki-wa. I am the only child of my father, Tall Pine, chief of the Dildoos." This she said in very good English.

Her voice was very musical, and it struck a sympathetic chord in the young man's heart.

"And you found me and saved my life?" he asked somewhat excitedly.

"My father saw the white man's ship broken on the rocks, and then the Great Spirit directed his sight to where you lay. You were still quite cold and stiff, like a dead man; and we thought your spirit had journeyed to the happy hunting-ground of your people. But the Great Spirit, who decides all things, would not have you die, and He gave you to us to give you back your strength.

"It was long—many days before the hot sickness would let you go; and I said to my father: 'The Great Spirit would not have him sleep in the big water, but He will find him a resting-place here';" and she pointed to a patch of green shadowed by a cluster of beeches. "'There,' I

said, "we will dig him a bed; and he shall have the skin of the big musk ox I shot far away in the cold waters of the north, for his robe, and when his shade passes onward to the Great Beyond, the shades of his fathers will know that the Micmacs were his friends.' But my father saw light in the darkness; and he said, 'Thy heart is faint, La-ki-wa; be thou of greater courage, for the life of the pale-face is like that of a flower that is scorched by the sun. When the rain falls, the flower springs again into life; and so will it be with the stranger who rests with us. The hot sickness will run its course, and then will come back all his freshness. The Great Spirit has not willed that he should die thus; by the time the moon shall have risen seven times over yonder tall fir, will he be brought back to the life that is.' "

"So said my father, who is a great medicine-man; and he was right."

"Then, have I been unconscious all the while?" asked Alston in great surprise.

"You have lain as one dead through the day and night. Sometimes you would talk with the tongue of a child and we could not understand the things you said."

"I owe you my life, how can I repay you?" said Alston fervently.

"The Tall Pine he no wish pay. He a

chief—not a white man's scout," said the old chief proudly.

"White man," said La-ki-wa somewhat sorrowfully, "think you we want gifts for what we have done? The Great Spirit would frown and the sky would grow black in anger did we take your gold. It was the will of the Great Spirit that we should take you from the big waters, and the heart of La-ki-wa was glad that it was so."

"Forgive me," cried the young man, "you did not understand me. It was not with money that I would seek to repay you, but with words that my heart feels, but my tongue cannot speak." And he took the maiden's hand in his.

She thrilled with emotion, and the rich colour mounted to her cheeks. For a moment her eyes looked at him, and then they were cast upon the ground.

"If the white man would please the Tall Pine and La-ki-wa, he will say no more," she said softly, with her eyes still upon the ground.

She did not move, and her hand lay quiet in his.

The old chief had gone outside, and they were alone in the tent.

"La-ki-wa," said Alston after a pause; and, as the words formed themselves on his lips, he thought how pretty the

name was. "The Great Spirit will not forget your kindness to me. But tell me, What has become of the others who were on board the ship? Are they safe?"

"I know not," she replied, "we searched for them, but we saw nothing."

"I pray God they may be safe," he murmured. "But, La-ki-wa, cannot one have news of them?"

"The eyes of the Micmacs see far; their ears are like unto those of the wolverine, and their feet have the swiftness of the deer. By the rise of to-morrow's moon you shall have news of them," replied the young girl quickly.

"I thank you," said Alston, gratefully pressing her hand.

"I will send our swiftest messengers at once," she said, moving to the opening in the tent. "Running Dog shall to the coast, and Big Deer to the town you call Harbour Grace."

"Stay one moment, La-ki-wa," cried out the young man in a tremulous voice. "Will you give him whom you call Big Deer a message to take to the town? My friends will think me dead, and I would let them know that I am still alive."

His thoughts were full of Violet at that moment, and he pictured her horror and

despair at hearing the news of the shipwreck. "She will think me dead," he said to himself, "for none can know that I have been saved. And if those who were in the boat have escaped, it will be but to tell of my loss!" and the thought was bitter to him. "Poor darling! my darling! God, I pray Thee that she may not have heard the news." And he took some consolation from the fact that, being on the Continent, she might not see an English newspaper; and he knew that she could not read the German newspapers, even if she looked at them.

But he, like most folk under similar circumstances, overlooked the fact that bad news will travel thousands of leagues long before good news has managed to turn the corner of the street.

"Big Deer shall take your message to your people," replied La-ki-wa. "Will my brother write the words Big Deer is to take, for he speaks not with the tongue of the pale-face."

Alston looked around the tent, but there was no sign of any writing materials. He stretched out his hand and dragged the coat which he had worn when the vessel went down, towards him. His pocket-book was gone. Then he remembered that in a pocket inside his waistcoat was a

5*l*. Bank of England note; and asking the girl to hand him the waistcoat, for he was too weak to rise and fetch it, it being hung on a peg at the far end of the *tepee*, he found that the note was still there.

He spread it on the skin in front of him, but he had nothing with which to write. La-ki-wa went to the fire and fetched a piece of charred wood, she also gave him a flat board on which to write.

His hand trembled violently as he wrote, and it was with difficulty that he could form the words. At length he finished the message, and he gave it to the young girl.

"The feet of Big Deer shall be as swift as those of the hunted stag," she said, simply, turning and leaving the tent.

She was gone about half-an-hour, and when she returned, there were traces of tears on her cheek; and her hand trembled violently as she gave him a bowl containing water and bruised herbs.

"Drink," she said, offering him the medicine; "my brother must sleep."

He drank a deep draught, and soon fell asleep. When he awoke, the sun was high in the heavens. He looked up and saw the great black eyes of La-ki-wa bent tenderly upon him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOVE OF LA-KI-WA.

Running Dog went to the coast, and in three days he returned. He brought good news back with him. Every one had been saved; but Alston, of course, was given up for lost. He had been enjoined to silence by La-ki-wa, and said nothing on his journey of the missing man being safe with his tribe.

And Big Deer?

Well Big Deer had not been sent. The Indian maiden had played the white man false.

When she took the note containing the message to Violet, curiosity tempted her to read it.

"*Miss Violet Parkinson,*
"*Hotel Kronprinz Franzensbad, Austria.*
"*Safe. Jack.*"

ran the message; and as the young girl read it, a feeling of intense jealousy overcame her.

"No! no!" she said, "I will not send it."

"Violet, Violet," she repeated to herself; that is the name he has had on his lips these many days.

"Violet! Yes that was the first word he said. Her likeness is in the gold case he wears over his heart, and her name is written thereon. What is this pale-face woman to him? Can she be his squaw?

She paused breathless, and a fierce passion raged within her.

"No! Big Deer shall not go," she said at length. If he takes the message to the town, the pale-face will know where the white stranger is, and they will take him away from us; and he will go to her —the Violet of whom he speaks. And we —no we cannot let him go. If he stays with us a little longer, he may learn to love La-ki-wa, and to forget the white squaw across the big waters."

According to her untutored mind she thought she was doing what was perfectly just, although the remembrance of what she had been taught in the mission-school about being truthful and straightforward in all things, made her hesitate for a moment in the course she was about to adopt. But it was only for a moment.

The wild love she had for Alston gained the mastery over her hesitation.

"What are the laws and customs of the pale-face to me? Does the pale-face consider the red man, when he covets what the red man has?" she added with much

bitterness. "Does the pale-face ever deal fairly with the red man? If a white squaw loved a young brave, would she give him up because he loved a squaw amongst his own people?

"Why, then, should I give him up, and return him to his people? What are his people to me? Is not the stranger mine? Did I not bring him back to life? His people think him dead; and if I had not nursed him and given him the strong medicine the Tall Pine made, he would have journeyed to the land of shadows. He belongs to Tall Pine, to the Dildoos—and to me. If he loves us not, then must he go; for we would not stay him should it be his wish to leave us.

"But," and she clasped her hands in an anguish of longing, "he will love me, and he will remain, and he shall be a great brave among us. La-ki-wa, who has turned a deaf ear to the love-words of the braves of her tribe will be his squaw—his slave.

"O Pale-face! Pale-face! learn to love me and to forget the squaw to whom these lines are written." She buried her face in her hands, and the big salt tears trickled through her fingers.

"No! Big Deer shall not go!" she said when she had recovered herself. "Let

the winds take his message; and with an exultant laugh, she tore the note into many fragments, and cast them to the winds.

She watched the last piece of paper go fluttering amongst the bushes, then she turned back and entered the tent.

* * * * *

Alston was at length convalescent, and eager to be away. He was not insensible to the old chief's kindness, nor was he indifferent to the young girl's attention, but there was a fierce longing in his heart to go to her who was so much to him, and personally assure her of his safety.

Another thing, La-ki-wa's ill-concealed affection for him made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

Eventually the day came when Alston was to leave for St. John's. He and La-ki-wa were sitting on a moss-grown trunk of a fallen pine. They were alone. The old chief and the rest of the tribe had gone into the forest hunting. Two old squaws were engaged outside the encampment skinning a deer; but they were out of sight and hearing of the young couple.

"So my white brother must leave us," said La-ki-wa sadly. "Have the days been so long and the nights so dark that he is so soon weary of us?"

"No, La-ki-wa, that is not it," replied Astlon. "I can never forget all the kindness you have shown me. I owe you my life, and I can give you nothing in return. I leave you only because I must. There are those away across the sea who are mourning me as lost, and to them I must go."

"And what will La-ki-wa do when you are gone? The Great Spirit sent you to us, and now you feel you need us no more—you take the trail that leads to the great city, and we are forgotten. The heart of La-ki-wa is sad."

She bent her head, and looked sorrowfully at a cluster of flowers at her feet.

"No, not forgotten, La-ki-wa," said the young man earnestly, taking her hand.

She looked up with a smile in her lustrous dark eyes.

"Then why will not my white brother stay?" Her voice sounded musically, and her look was full of passionate longing.

"That cannot be. Go, I must; but I will take you with me in my thoughts. And every time I see the evening star shining in the sky, I shall think of you, La-ki-wa, and of what I owe you."

"No, no," she murmured, shaking her

head. "You say so now, but you will forget me. In less than four moons you will think of La-ki-wa no more. It is always so. Listen! Once I found a dove lying here," and she pointed at her feet. "It had been smitten by a hawk, and its blood was flowing from its breast. It was nearly dead, but I took it and warmed it into life. It grew strong, and stayed with me until six suns had set. Then one day it felt it could use its wings again, and it flew out of my hands to yonder tall tree. There it sat looking at me, and I said 'It is grateful; it will not go away, but will stay with me, for the birds of the forest forget not a woman's kindness.' But it stayed but a moment. Then it flapped its wings, and flew in a circle round the tree. 'It will return,' I thought, 'for it is but trying its flight.' Not so. It mounted higher and higher till it became as but a speck of sand in the sky. I called to it, but it answered not, but flew on and on, and I saw it no more. Many days I waited for it, throwing food upon the ground. Other birds came and ate the food, but my dove, which I had learned to love, came not again."

She ceased, and Alston saw the tears starting in her eyes.

"As with the dove, so with my white brother," she continued. "He finds he can use his wings, and he would in a moment fly away. He will go down to the big waters, and the big boat will take him away—away from Tall Pine, away from La-ki-wa, away from the Micmacs, who love him as themselves, and his back as he goes down the trail to the town will be the last we shall see of him. La-ki-wa will sit here as she sits now, but she will be alone. She will call out to her white brother, but he will not hear her; she will wait for him, but he will not come, for he will have flown as the dove flew; and his shadow will fall on the camp of the Micmacs no more. The heart of La-ki-wa, therefore, is sad."

She stopped, and Alston could see that she was torn with emotion.

"Take heart, La-ki-wa," said he tenderly. "It may not be so. I promise you to try and return, and I trust nothing will prevent my doing so. But believe me I shall never forget you; the Great Spirit who watches over red man and white man alike be my witness."

"Then why does my white brother leave us now? Has La-ki-wa done anything to displease him?" and she looked at him reproachfully.

"Nothing, nothing," he replied fervently; "but it must be so."

"Why not stay here with us?" and her eyes lit up with a passionate longing as she spoke. My brother can be a chief among us, and La-ki-wa will be his servant." She dropped her eyes, and her face coloured deeply. "My father will make you chief after him, and his people will obey you and love you. The Tall Pine is not rich as the white man is rich, but he has many ponies; and he knows where is hid the yellow metal which the white man loves.

"See!" she added, taking from a deer-skin pouch a nugget of gold. "Where this was, there is much more, and it is only the Tall Pine who knows where to find it. It shall all be yours if you will stay with us. La-ki-wa is not a child of the clearing, and she loves not the *tepees* of stone and brick, but where he whom she loves goes, she will go. La-ki-wa has said."

Her voice trembled with emotion, and the hand which she had laid upon his arm quivered violently.

For a moment the young man was too embarrassed to reply. Here was a girl to whom he owed his life telling him, in unconventional tones, that she loved him, and that she would have him stay and marry

her, for her declaration meant nothing short of that. All this was, of course, impossible; but how could he tell her that he loved another without paining her? He tried to think out an answer, but his ideas crowded one upon the other, leaving him more confused than at the beginning.

"La-ki-wa has said. What says my white brother?"

Her musical voice awoke him from his reverie, and in a moment he had decided what to do.

"You see this, La-ki-wa?" and he took from his pocket a locket containing a miniature of Violet.

She looked at it with a strange, feverish look in her eyes, but said nothing.

"This, La-ki-wa, is the portrait of the one I love. Do not start so, but listen to me to the end. We have loved many months, and she has promised to be my wife. She awaits me there over the sea. Her heart, too, is sad, La-ki-wa, and every day that I come not is a day of darkness for her."

Alston stopped; for the look of unutterable pain which swept over her face startled him. He took her hand, but she withdrew it sharply.

"Listen, La-ki-wa," he continued at length. "I know what I owe you—I know that had it not been for you I should

be lying here under the earth. You saved my life, and that is a debt that can never be repaid. In my heart I thank you, more than my tongue can find words to say. But "—and he hesitated—"I must be true to the one I love; and what you say cannot be."

For a few minutes she did not speak, and her eyes the while were fixed on the portrait, which she had taken in her hand.

"Be it so, my brother. I was as one blind to think it could be otherwise;" and she gave a short, bitter laugh. "How can La-ki-wa hope to find favour in your eyes when the maiden whom you love is as this? She is fair with the brightness of the morning. The sun smiles upon her hair, and the light of the blue sky is in her eyes; her face is like the colour of the wild rose, and her neck is as white as milk. But La-ki-wa is a daughter of the night. Her hair is black as the feathers of the raven on the tree there; her voice is as his in sound, her skin is as the mould at her feet, and her eyes are black like the wild berry. My brother is right; the white maiden is for the white brother, and the redskin for the redskin. But, my brother, I—" she did not finish the sentence; but threw herself on the ground in a paroxysm of tears.

Alston did not disturb her. "It is better so," he thought.

For several minutes the young girl lay thus, whilst the raven croaked dismally. The butterflies flitted past in the sunlight, and the golden-banded bees droned from flower to flower. A gentle wind swept through the pines with a musical "swish swish." A jay came and perched on a tree close by, and looked with curious eyes at the quivering form of the Indian girl. It was soon joined by another, and the pair entered into a brisk conversation.

"What fools these mortals be!" chirped the birds. "Look at us, how happy we are. We mate and are content; we never quarrel," and with a look, meant to express disdain, they flew away over the tall fir tops.

"La-ki-wa," said Alston presently, stooping and touching her gently, "it pains me to see you like this."

With the touch of his hand she roused herself, and her tear-laden eyes for a moment met his. It was but for a moment, for she covered them with her hands. Then she jumped up, and paced distractedly up and down.

"What will my brother think of me?" she said, turning to Alston with a pleading look. Her eyes were dry now, and she appeared quite calm, but the nervous

twitching of her mouth told how great an effort she was making to control herself.

"My brother," she went on, "will think I have the timid heart of a deer with the crying voice of a papoose. I, the daughter of Tall Pine—I, a Micmac, to show the grief that is in my heart. Oh, my brother, I am ashamed."

A dark frown knitted her brows, and she stamped her foot in her vexation.

"The heart of La-ki-wa is that of a true woman," replied the young man soothingly; "and I shall never forget the place I hold in it. Love is not a thing to be ashamed of," he continued, "and it is only the strong who can love with all their hearts."

He paused, and then, taking both her hands in his, said, in tones of the deepest earnestness, "There are, La-ki-wa, two kinds of love; the love of the brother, and the love of the husband. To the white maiden, whose portrait you have seen, I am pledged. She will be my wife; it cannot be otherwise. But you, La-ki-wa, can be my sister. I shall ever think of you as such. I will tell her whom I go to marry all I owe to you; and she will love you and will say, 'Your sister is my sister.' Be it so, my sister?"

She looked him straight in the face.

All passion had gone out of her eyes and a great calmness had come over her.

"Be it so, my brother," she said simply.

He stooped and kissed her on the forehead.

She trembled slightly at this, and for a second the hands he held clutched him tightly.

"La-ki-wa is content," she added. "She will not forget her brother, the white chief, and she knows that he will not forget her."

She released her hands, and stood a moment in hesitation. Then taking hold of the locket, which also contained a portrait of Alston, she said,—

"My brother will not forget me, and the star in the sky will, he says, remind him of his sister; but will not he give La-ki-wa something to remind her of him? Here is a likeness of my brother. I have seen it and I would have it. I would wear it next my heart; and as it beats against it I shall feel that my brother is by me. One day my heart will be stilled. They will bury the portrait with me, for it will be my wish. It will go with me to Shadowland still on my heart. I shall look for you there amongst the shades of the many. If you have not yet come I will wait for you, my brother; and when

you come you will know that I have not forgotten you."

She ceased speaking; and Alston took the locket and placed it round her neck.

She pressed it to her heart.

"So my brother," she said. "Let it be there for ever."

Then, as if by a sudden impulse, she threw her arms around his neck. She bent her head and kissed him on the lips, once.

Then she was gone.

A few moments later the bushes behind Alston parted, and with a noiseless tread the towering form of Tall Pine stood by his side.

"Is my white brother ready?" said the chief, in broken English. "Big Deer waits in the tent below to show him the trail to the white man's town."

Alston started, for he had not heard Tall Pine approach.

"Yes, I am ready," he replied; "but what news does Running Dog, whom I saw enter the camp a while ago, bring? Are my friends safe, or have they been lost in the sea?"

"The Great Spirit," answered the chief gravely, "smiled on them, and the big waters were not their bed."

"Thank God!" said Alston fervently,

and he plied the chief with questions as to how they had been saved.

Tall Pine told him all he knew. The boat had been picked up by a fishing-smack, and the rescued men were at that moment in St. John's.

The "Copper King's" forebodings had not been realized.

"You will go now," added Tall Pine; "your friends know you are safe, and they wait for you. Big Deer will show you the trail, and by to-morrow's sun you will be there."

He paused, and a grave look came upon his face.

"There is a cloud over your star," he said at length. "I saw it all last night. See, I will show you."

And with a look of great solemnity he took from inside his jacket a brightly polished crystal.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MEDICINE-MAN'S MAGIC.

Alston wonderingly took the crystal. It was conical in shape and suspended from a twisted band of human hair. It was quite transparent, and, at first sight, seemed to be but an ordinary piece of crystal. But at the point where the hair

was passed through, some mystic characters were scratched, and on looking at the object more closely Alston thought the inside flashed with a sudden brilliancy. Perhaps it was caused by the light of the sun striking it; but anyhow it sparkled and glowed the more he looked at it.

The chief requested him to keep gazing at it, and whilst he did so, the old man lit a fire. Then he took a big charred stick and drew a circle round Alston, muttering an incantation the while.

The fire did not flare, but gave forth clouds of smoke, and soon the young man could barely distinguish the tall form of the medicine-man.

"Do not stir," he heard the old chief call out; "but look at the medicine-stone and think. Think of the white squaw—the one whose likeness you wear near your heart."

Alston did as he was bid. He looked at the crystal, which emitted a strange lurid light; and his thoughts went over the sea to the one he loved.

He pictured his darling waiting for him with pale cheeks and tear-stained eyes. Then all of a sudden Brown, the medium, came into his thoughts; and he wondered whether that rascal was still with her and her mother.

He tried to think only of Violet; but somehow she was always connected with the medium; and now a feeling of inexplicable anxiety took possession of him.

"Look, my white brother, look, and you will see," he heard the chief say through the clouds of smoke, which now completely obscured him from sight.

Alston did look; and all at once the flame went out of the crystal which he held. It turned dark, as if shadowed by a cloud; then it gradually grew light again; and as he gazed at it he seemed to see pictures forming themselves upon its surface.

At first they were confused and blurred, and he could make nothing of them; then they grew more distinct; and he could make out the interior of a house.

It was a bedroom. In the bed lay a woman. It was Mrs. Parkinson. She was very still as one dead. Presently she moved, showing that she was alive; but Alston could see that she was very ill.

At this point the crystal darkened again; a death-like stillness reigned around, broken only by the incantation of the medicine-man.

Alston stood gazing at the magic

crystal, whilst the chief's voice came louder and louder upon the stillness.

The blood rushed to his head. The smoke almost suffocated him; and the aromatic fumes of the burning wood had an intoxicating effect upon him.

He felt his limbs becoming every moment more rigid. His brain seemed on fire, whilst heavier and heavier grew his body, until finally he was unable to stir hand or foot.

He tried to explain the cause, but his mind was too confused to analyze the symptoms. It seemed as if he were under a mesmeric spell, and that the luminous gleams which shot in front of him represented the soul leaving his body, which in its turn was rooted to the spot where he stood.

It was as it were with the eyes of his soul that he appeared to see. His eyes were fixed upon the crystal which had remained colourless since the last scene.

Presently its surface became troubled with gathering shadows. They disappeared, the object assuming opalescent lines, a rim of fire forming a framework to the picture which was gradually forming itself in its centre.

This time it was the library at Parkhurst.

In the room he could dimly make out two figures. They gradually became clear to him.

One was Violet. Yes, it was she; there was no doubt of it. Yet how strange she looked! She was asleep. No, she was awake, for her eyes were open; yet she looked as one in a dream.

And who is that standing in front of her, making passes with his hand?

The form becomes more distinct.

It is Brown!

"God in heaven, he is mesmerizing her!" shrieked the young man.

With this cry the girl seemed to suddenly awake, and with a look of horror jumped up and confronted the medium.

Alston saw no more. The crystal slipped out of his nerveless fingers and fell to the ground.

When he looked up, the smoke had lost its denseness, and the form of Tall Pine stood out clear and distinct.

"My white brother has seen: what will he do?" said the old chief gravely.

Alston did not answer, but stood as one stunned. He was for the moment quite incapable of thought, every feeling within him being as mute as the movements of a watch, the mainspring of which has been suddenly broken.

Tall Pine repeated his question, striking him smartly with a green fir bough.

The young man started, brought to his senses with the blow.

"What does it mean?" he said huskily.

His was not a visionary nature, and he felt that the whole thing was but a delusion of the senses; but all the same that did not alter the main point. An apparition caused by the over-excited state of his nerves was, nevertheless, an apparition; and there was enough in what he saw, or imagined he saw, to cause him the deepest anxiety.

"My God, if it should be true," he muttered to himself, gazing at the expiring embers of the fire.

"What my brother has seen is what is or what will be," broke in Tall Pine, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder. "The stone never lies. But it is not too late; the trail to the big waters is not far, and the boats of the pale-face go as fast as the feet of the deer. Go, my brother. Big Deer waits for you."

"I am ready," replied Alston. "Show me the way and I will follow." And with feverish haste he followed the chief's lengthy stride.

A few moments later he was shaking his host's hand in farewell. La-ki-wa was nowhere to be seen. Then piloted by Big Deer, he made for the trail leading to the sea.

As they hurried along, a suppressed cry as of a breaking heart came from a clump of alders, then all was silent.

It was the farewell of La-ki-wa.

* * * *

When Alston had gone some distance on the trail, Big Deer drew from his belt a folded piece of paper, which he handed to the young man.

Alston opened it, wondering what it could contain. It was a message from La-ki-wa.

The paper, a piece of a biscuit bag, was much crumpled and soiled, and the writing was cramped and not very legible.

Eventually, however, Alston made it out, and this is what she wrote :—

"Brother, I did you a great wrong, and my heart is heavy. I did not send Big Deer with the message, but cast it in many pieces to the winds. I wanted you, my brother to stay with us ; and now you have gone. I could not tell you what I had done. I was too ashamed, and my hand tells you now that you are gone, what

my lips were afraid to say. Forgive me, my brother, tell me that you forgive me.

"LA-KI-WA."

"My God!" gasped Alston when he read it; "had I but known this before. My poor darling will think me drowned, and will mourn me as one dead."

His thoughts were bitter towards La-ki-wa, but they gradually softened when he remembered what he owed her.

"She, poor child, but did as her nature guided her," he said softly. "It is not for me to judge harshly one to whom I owe my life."

He wrote a few lines across the paper in answer to La-ki-wa's appeal for forgiveness, and handed it to Big Deer. Then they pressed on through the forest together.

CHAPTER XX.

BROWN PROPOSES.

THE last the reader saw of Brown was sitting in the train bound for Dresden.

He was, as I have intimated, in anything but a pleasant mood. He in fact was exceedingly wroth, and expressed his feelings in distinctly unparliamentary language.

Yes, gentle reader, this "Heaven-sent"

individual actually swore, and his "swears" were far from choice.

He cursed the police, the arbitrary laws of Austria, everything, everybody, and even himself; and it was only when he had exhausted every oath in his pretty extensive vocabulary, that he stopped.

No doubt his position was an extremely unpleasant one, for no one likes to be turned out of a country, especially when he is making money; and it was hard upon the worthy doctor to have to leave all his uncollected fees behind. Moreover, he was much exercised as to what view Mrs. Parkinson would take of the matter.

"If she should take their view of the case?" he said to himself, and he groaned at the thought that he might lose so valuable a patroness.

But his anxiety on this score was speedily set at rest; for, on arriving at Dresden, he received a telegram from the widow, saying that she and her daughter were coming on by the next train.

When she reached Dresden, he told his story in such a way that she, as might have been anticipated, looked upon him in the light of a martyr.

"They are as you say," she said to the medium consolingly, "afraid of the truths of spiritualism, the brutes. But," she

added, "can't the Princess help you? She ought to see you righted."

"No. I fear it is she who has done it, or her friend, Dr. Trier. I had my suspicions about that man from the first." The stains upon his right hand had caused the worthy medium, when he saw them, considerable anxiety, for he at once concluded that some one had out of *malice prepense* put colouring-matter on the handle of the musical box. He had heard of such a thing being done before.

"The wicked woman," broke in Mrs. Parkinson. "I always thought she wasn't a true Spiritualist; and she a princess, too. But never mind, Doctor," she added; "I will stand your friend."

"I believe you, madam," he replied unctuously, warmly grasping her hand.

And the "martyr" returned with her to England.

Violet had raised no objection to leaving Franzensbad, when her mother informed her that she had decided to start at once. Life had for the moment lost all charms for her, and she moved about as one in a dream. She had not altogether lost hope; for she could not bring herself to believe that Fate could be so cruel.

If anything, she welcomed the return to

England, for there she would get earlier news of the fate of those on board the *Placentia*, and how she prayed that it might be good news.

The news of Brown's expulsion was speedily noised abroad; and short telegrams announcing the fact appeared in the London dailies.

The spiritualistic press devoted much space to the vindication of Brown's character, and characterized the action of the Austrian police as a piece of unparalleled barbarism.

A weak-kneed, long-haired member of Parliament, with a leaning towards Spiritualism, was so much moved by the story of the medium's wrongs, that he asked the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether it was the intention of the Government to make representations to the Austrian Government upon the subject.

The reply of the Under Secretary was curt and to the point.

It was not the intention of the Government to make any representations whatever; and the questioner sat down amidst a general titter.

Then a member, well-known for his ruthless exposure of all shams and frauds, got up and asked the Home Secretary

"whether, in view of the numerous frauds practised under the name of Spiritualism, and the cruel wrong frequently done weak-minded people by the professional rascals called mediums, it was intended to adopt legal measures against these mediumistic impostors."

The Home Secretary replied that he must have notice of the question, and the matter dropped for the time being.

But the member who had put the question was not so easily disposed of. He was a journalist, and he wrote several trenchant articles upon the subject. "It is monstrous," he wrote, "that whilst a wretched fortune-telling woman gets sent to prison for three months for crossing a credulous slavey's hand with a piece of silver, the medium, who is by far the greater fraud of the two, is allowed to carry on his impostures unmolested. The harm done by the wandering gipsy is infinitesimal as compared with the cruel wrongs perpetrated by these mediums, who not only rob their victims of their gold, but of their senses. Many a person has been driven to a lunatic asylum through dabbling in Spiritualism, whilst there are countless instances of insult offered to female 'sitters,' at the so-called 'dark séances.' No man of the world

would for a moment think of letting his wife or his sister, or even his cousin or his aunt—if they were good-looking and emotional—attend a dark séance; and it is high time the public should know the true nature of these sittings.

"To be frank, I have no sympathy with the silly folk who believe that their great grandmother can materialize in an old brocaded silk gown, or that 'Peter,' 'John King,' or any other 'control' can play upon trumpets or bang about tambourines in spirit form; but even fools need protection when they are unable to protect themselves. The law is able to protect them, and it is the duty of the law to do so.

"It has been laid down that mediums are in the eyes of the law rogues and vagabonds, and if the police were to concentrate their efforts to rooting out the swindlers who play high jinks in my lady's drawing-room, instead of harassing the wretched woman who for a shilling or so, or at best a disused petticoat, foretells the future of some love-lorn area-belle, they would be doing good work, and at the same time their duty. It is high time we were rid of these pests."

This article greatly enraged the Spiritualists, and when Brown read it, he quaked with fear.

He did not relish the picture of three months' hard labour as a rogue and a vagabond.

Prison diet and prison discipline have apparently a depressing influence on a man's mediumship; for the gifted beings who have fallen within the clutches of the law seemed to have been completely forsaken by their "controls" immediately the gaol gates closed upon them.

Monck, whose familiar spirits could untie the most deftly-knotted cords, and unfasten any lock when he was practising as a medium, turned their backs on him when he lay in his prison cell pining for liberty. And Mrs. Fletcher, whose circle of spirit friends was exceedingly large, was permitted to serve her sentence of hard labour without a Spiritual finger being stirred to set her free.

I cannot help thinking that it was exceedingly ungrateful on the part of the spirits, for whose sake—according to the arguments of the Spiritualists—the dear mediums went to prison, not to give them a helping hand in their misfortune.

What is the use of spirits knocking off padlocks, breaking chains, and untying ropes, and transporting bulky mediums across London free of charge, if they let

the mediums languish behind iron bars, when, according to previous exploits, they with one stroke might set them at liberty and carry them out of harm's way.

To release an imprisoned medium and transport him, say, a paltry hundred yards from the prison walls, would be sufficient evidence of spirit-power to silence the most rabid disbeliever. But somehow the spirits always fail to see the matter in this light; and, like all fair-weather friends, at once cut a medium when he is in trouble.

If, however, imprisonment is destructive of mediumship, it serves to make mediums who have suffered it, more careful in future; for no medium, I believe, has thought fit to qualify himself for a second term of hard labour.

Both Monck and Fletcher left these inhospitable shores on their release, never to return; and Slade preferred the safety of his native land to venturing to return to a country where a cruel law promised to give him a rest from mediumship for the space of three calendar months.

All this Brown thought carefully over when he read the article in question, and he was, as I have said, filled with a great fear lest he might be prosecuted by any one of the many credulous people he had so shamelessly defrauded.

"I will drop this business," he said to himself, "as soon as I have made my pile; and I don't see why this old fool (referring to Mrs. Parkinson) shouldn't provide me with all I want."

The "old fool" had already been bled to the extent of upwards of 200*l.*, and, in addition, she had paid his expenses on the Continent.

But Brown hungered after the whole of her income and the substantial balance at her bankers.

Why shouldn't he marry her? he thought. She was about his own age, and still in a manner good-looking. Brown considered himself to be not only handsome, but singularly fetching, and believed that he had only to exert himself to win the affections of any woman—that is, any woman of the circle in which he mixed.

He therefore, in his own parlance, determined to "go for" the widow; and "go for" her he did.

* * * *

It was a few nights after they returned from the Continent, that Brown made the attempt.

He and Mrs. Parkinson were sitting in the library, when the widow said,—

"I am very anxious to know, Doctor,

when the materialization of my husband is likely to take place. I cannot see that the conditions are in any way unfavourable; and now that you appear to be so thoroughly *en rapport* with the sphere in which my dear husband is, you would, I feel certain, be able to procure a most successful materialization."

"Are you still so anxious that his spirit should be materialized?" asked Brown.

"Anxious, why, my dear Doctor, it is the dream of my life. It was with this object that I asked you here, and yet the weeks have gone by, and we appear to be as far off the event as ever."

"I cannot force the conditions, madam; and if you think another medium could be more successful than I am, it rests with you to say so, and I will at once take my departure," replied the medium with some show of indignation.

"No, no, Doctor; I do not think that, and I know that the matter entirely depends upon the conditions. But would it be too much to ask you to make the attempt?"

"As you wish, madam, as you wish. But you must not blame me if the result is not so satisfactory as you anticipate."

"Not so satisfactory as I anticipate! My dear Doctor, what do you mean?"

"Well, madam, to be plain with you, it may happen that your husband does not wish to return to this world," replied the wily doctor.

"Not wish to return; my Septimus not wish to visit me? My dear Doctor, it is impossible," exclaimed Mrs. Parkinson, gazing at her complacent companion aghast.

"Are you not aware that he promised with his last breath to appear to me at the first opportunity? and do you expect me to believe that he will have either forgotten his promise, or lost his desire to keep it?" and the good lady turned red with indignation.

"Do not misunderstand me, madam," he replied soothingly, "I do not say that he, being able, neglects to return to you, or that he has forgotten his promise; I simply say that in the course of my experience as a medium, I have frequently come across instances where the spirit has either been unable to visit those whom he has left behind, or has formed new ties in the spirit world, which cause him to be unwilling to do so."

"Doctor, are you mad? Do you think my husband is likely to forget his duty to me? On earth-life he was a model of constancy and devotion! and he cannot have thus changed now that he is in the

land of spirits," replied Mrs. Parkinson, with dignity.

"There are temptations in the other world as well as in this," said Brown, lowering his eyes; "it is not for me to say what I, whilst in a trance, have seen; but—" here he paused.

"Pray be explicit. What have you seen, dear Doctor?"

The Doctor coughed, and hesitated to answer.

"Do not keep anything back," continued Mrs. Parkinson; it is your duty to tell me everything."

"As you will, madam, as you will; only do not blame me if the news is distasteful to you."

"Doctor, how can I blame you—you who are but the instrument in the hands of the spirits?"

Thus encouraged, Brown launched forth.

He, with assumed diffidence, told her how in a trance state he had established a connection with the sphere in which her husband was then in, and had consequently seen all that was going on up there.

"Your husband, madam," he went on to say, "was surrounded by females."

"By females, did you say, Doctor?" broke in Mrs. Parkinson, a jealous look coming in her eyes.

"Yes, by a whole troop of them; and what is more, he seemed perfectly happy in their company."

"This is monstrous," said Mrs. Parkinson, rising from her seat and pacing hurriedly about the room. "I cannot believe it; I will not believe it. He who never so much as even looked at another woman, to be spending his time in the spheres with female spirits, whilst I think of him every moment in the day, and count every minute to the time when he will appear to me. No, Doctor, some evil spirit must have controlled you when you saw this."

The credulous woman did not for a moment doubt that Brown had actually seen what he related.

Brown assured her, however, that he had not been controlled by an evil spirit, and that he had no reason for doubting the accuracy of his vision.

"These things will happen, madam," he said; "and a spirit finding what he believes to be his affinity in the other world, will often forget those to whom he is bound by earthly ties. The homely saying, that when the cat's away, the mice will play, applies to spirits as well as to mortals.

Mrs. Parkinson did not reply; she was

quite overcome by what she had heard. She had great faith in Brown as a medium, and the convincing way in which he spoke gave her no cause to doubt the accuracy of his assertions.

"But why, my dear Mrs. Parkinson, should this grieve you?" and Brown took her hand in his. "Why make your life on earth miserable because he may have forgotten you? There are others who would love you." He paused to note the effect of his words; but his companion did not reply, or show in any way that she understood what he was aiming at.

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Parkinson, there are those who would like to have the right to comfort you. I—yes, I love you."

"You, Dr. Brown, I never dreamt that you thought of me in this way," and the widow withdrew her hand.

"Yes, I have loved you all these weeks. I have kept silent simply because I knew how deeply you were attached to the memory of your late husband; but now, knowing what you do, I felt that I might tell you of my love. Say I may have hope."

Mrs. Parkinson remained silent for a few moments; the proposal literally took her breath away.

"I do not know what to say to you,"

she eventually stammered out. "I have no intention of marrying again, and I had no idea that you thought of me in this way. Besides, I promised my husband never to marry."

"But," said Brown eagerly, "suppose your husband gives his consent; may I then hope to overcome your resolution not to marry again?"

"That might alter the case—but I really have not given the matter a thought; so, Doctor, do not say any more about it now."

"Your wish shall be obeyed," replied Brown sententiously, kissing her hand. "To-morrow I will endeavour to obtain a materialization of your husband's spirit; and then we shall be able to obtain his views upon the subject."

"How I hope the conditions will be favourable," said Mrs. Parkinson joyfully.

"I hope so too," replied Brown. "And they will be, too," he added to himself; "or I'll know the reason why."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MATERIALIZATION OF ALDERMAN PARKINSON.

THE next day Brown made the necessary preparations for the proposed séance.

He spent a good deal of the afternoon

in his bed-room with the door locked, taking with him the Parkinson family album.

The séance was to take place immediately after dinner; and Mrs. Parkinson, who was assured that the conditions were apparently favourable, was in a state of great excitement.

There was a room in Parkhurst specially set apart for dark séances, and it was in this room, hallowed by the visits of high-class "spooks," that the materialization was to take place.

The room had no windows, and the only light admitted therein came from a skylight, over which a curtain could be drawn, rendering the chamber sufficiently dark to satisfy the most exacting "spirit."

There was a table in the middle, round which were placed about a dozen chairs. Upon this table lay tubes, through which the "dear spirits" could speak, a musical box which they could wind up, some fans with which to cool the "sitters" and a tambourine and a banjo upon which they could play.

It is astonishing how fond the "dear spirits" appear to be of banjoes, tambourines, fairy bells, and other mundane musical instruments, and how frequently, without the slightest claim to musical pro-

ficiency, they inflict such music as they can strum out of these instruments upon the "sitters."

Around the walls were hung several "spirit-photographs," and over the door was a "spirit-drawing," in which the artist (a "spirit") had outraged nature by making a river run up hill. This curious feature in the drawing was, the faithful explained, not one to be scoffed at, for was it not well known, that in the "spheres" things were entirely different to what they were on earth, and in all probability rivers up there ran up-hill instead of down-hill, as with us here. Indeed, they asserted, it must be so, otherwise the "spirit," although he might not be an artist, would not have so depicted it. This little picture, dear at a shilling—even as a curiosity—cost the late Alderman 20*l.*

In a gorgeous gilt frame was a slate, upon which a message had been written through the mediumship of the notorious "Dr." Slade.

The message was from Nero, and was written in English, which is, of course, the language in which Nero would write.

Nero "guessed" that he wasn't having a particularly "high time" in the other world, and he appeared to be greatly

annoyed at having to associate with Wilkes Booth, Henry Wainwright, and other murderous "toughs." Nero wound up by saying that any one who wished to have a "good time" in the spheres, and mix with "tony" spirits, must "live good" whilst on earth, and he signed his name with a small n.

Nero, I suppose, would have written in Latin, had "Dr." Slade been conversant with that language; but such not being the case, he wrote in the language that the medium best understood.

This is but reasonable; for it cannot be expected that a spirit, whether it be Nero, Alexander the Great, or Ramses II. who wishes to communicate with this world, should allow a mere question of language to get in the way. As long as he makes his meaning clear to the medium, that, I think, should be quite sufficient.

There were other objects of interest—to Spiritualists—in the room.

There was a lock of "John King's" hair, which a lady admirer had snipped off the last time he materialized there. A cracked walnut lay on a plate as evidence of the strength of "Joey's" molars. Professor Crooks's beloved "Katie King" had contributed a portion of the raiment in which she was wont to disport herself. This

material, weaved it was said, by spiritual hands, looked to the sceptical like ordinary muslin. A wax mould of the "Spirit Marié" right foot, and a bunch of withered flowers left by one "Abdullah," a black man, completed the exhibits.

At the far end of the room was a cabinet composed of four uprights, supporting a brass rod in the form of a horse-shoe.

Attached to this rod by brass rings, and covering each side of the cabinet, was a thick black curtain. The curtain was open in the centre, but could be readily drawn together, either from the inside or the outside. The cabinet, which, as will be seen, was simplicity itself, had been constructed under the personal supervision of the late Alderman, who pointed to it as a complete answer to the allegations of sceptics, that the majority of cabinets had false backs or trap doors through which the medium's accomplices could appear.

With the exception of a stout oaken post with an iron staple firmly driven in the centre, to which a medium could be bound if desired, the cabinet was completely bare.

It was into this cabinet that Brown stepped for the purpose of producing the materialization of Alderman Parkinson, whilst Mrs. Parkinson sat at the table in a state of suppressed excitement.

Now was the dream of her widowed life about to be realized. He who had promised to return in spirit form was about to keep his promise. The conditions were, Brown assured her, eminently favourable for the materialization, and over the port and filberts, her husband's spirit had rapped out a message informing her that he would, if all went well, appear to her that night.

No wonder the widow was elated; and the only thing that tended to mar her joy, was her daughter's refusal to attend the séance.

"No, mother, I will not be present," she said. "I do not believe in Dr. Brown's power to produce my father's spirit, and the whole idea is hateful to me; and the sooner this horrid man leaves our house, the better it will be for all of us."

Mrs Parkinson made some snappish reply, and proceeded to join the medium in the séance room, leaving Violet in a state of great indignation.

"All my trouble is owing to that wicked man," she said to herself. "If he had not come here, Jack would not have gone away. O Jack! Jack! are you alive or dead? They all say you are drowned, but I cannot believe it. God would not be so cruel to us. I will still hope, although, my darling, all say you are dead."

Before entering the cabinet, Brown strongly impressed upon the widow not to be surprised at anything that might happen.

"You must be calm, my dear Mrs. Parkinson, quite calm; or the conditions may be too disturbed to allow of a satisfactory materialization."

Mrs Parkinson promised to do her best, and, as has been mentioned, Brown stepped into the cabinet leaving her seated at the table.

For fully half an hour Mrs. Parkinson sat thus without a sound coming from the cabinet, beyond a slight rustling, which the widow thought to be the flapping of "spirit wings," but which a less credulous person would have put down to some one dressing himself.

At length a deep sepulchral voice came from behind the curtains:

"Amelia, are you there?"

"Yes, dear," replied the widow. "Do you think you can fully materialize to-night?"

"I will try."

A few minutes went by, and then the curtains were gently shaken from within.

"Amelia, dear, I am coming," said the voice; and the curtains opened, and a white-clad form stepped from out of the cabinet.

Mrs Parkinson gave a little shriek of joy as the form appeared; for she recognized in it the materialized spirit of her husband.

"Septimus," she said. "Dear Septimus."

"Amelia," he replied. "Dear Amelia."

"Come near me, dear," said the widow.

"The Spirit" approached the table.

She arose and clasped the form fervently in her arms. It was very substantial, and embraced her with energy.

"At last! at last!" she said. "Now, dear, you will come often."

"No, I can never appear again," muttered the spirit in a gruff tone. "I go beyond the materialization sphere this very night; and I have come to say good-bye."

"Good-bye!" shrieked the lady; "and I have waited for you so patiently all these years. It is too hard, too hard." "Forget you, Septimus, how can I? Did you not bid me ever think of you, and try and communicate with you? And why should I forget you now?

"Ah! I see it all," she added, disengaging herself from the "spirit's" embrace. "It is you who have forgotten me; you who have not had patience enough to wait for me. Your goings on have been made known to me; and I can well understand

why you wish to be forgotten. It is cruel, wicked of you to behave so."

Here she burst into tears, whilst "the spirit" did his best to console her. But Mrs. Parkinson, naturally a jealous woman, remembering what Brown had told her the day before, refused to be consoled. She believed her husband, who had been so true to her whilst on earth, to be false to her in spirit-land, and she told him so.

"Pray be calm, Amelia," urged the spirit; "you must seek mundane consolation whilst you have a chance. It is decreed so."

"I do not understand you," she said between her sobs.

"Well, you must marry."

"Marry! Whom? why?"

"Why, marry Brown. He loves you, and would make you a good husband; and without him you will never reach the sphere I am now going to, and we shall then be parted for ever." The spirit gave a deep sigh, and taking the widow in his arms, he drew her close to him.

"Yes, marry Brown; it is my wish."

"How can I marry him? I have never even thought of him in such a light? Besides, dear, did you not say in your will that if I married again I was to forfeit

everything you left me? You cannot have forgotten this."

"The devil," said the spirit to himself; and if Mrs. Parkinson had not been so agitated, she must have heard him.

For a moment the form was silent. Then he answered her.

"Quite so, my dear," and over the spirit's face came a shade of disappointment. "I had forgotten all about it. We do not think of mundane things in the spheres. It was a harsh clause to make, and I would undo it if I could; but it is impossible. And now I think of it, if you should marry Brown, you would have to live in poverty; for he, poor fellow, is not a rich man. But, dear, something will have to be done, or we shall be lost to each other for ever, and that would indeed be terrible. Do you think a marriage could be arranged between Brown and our Violet?"

"Violet? Why she hates him!"

"Does she?" said the spirit, with a meaning smile. "She might do worse than marry him; and it is only through such a marriage that you can hope to join me in the spheres, for Brown, as you know, is such a powerful medium."

"I'm sure she wouldn't do so. Her heart has already been given to another."

"But he's dead, drowned at sea."

"Are you sure of that?" she asked eagerly.

"Sure. I saw him die."

"Poor Violet," said the widow, with a deep sigh; "it will break her heart."

"People don't break their hearts so easily," replied the spirit gruffly; "she'll forget him soon enough."

"Never, dear; she's too true for that."

"We shall see; we shall see," was the reply. "Anyhow, I may count upon you doing your best to bring the matter about."

"If it is your wish, dear; but I'm very much afraid."

"It is my wish."

And before Mrs. Parkinson could say another word, the form had disengaged itself from her embrace, and melted, as it were, into nothingness, and the séance came to an end.

When the lights were turned up, Mrs. Parkinson was in a state of great nervous prostration, and she at once retired to her room.

Brown was, as may be expected, highly elated at the success of his latest move, and he determined not to let the grass grow under his feet.

"I have," he said, "succeeded in getting

on the right side of the mother, and now for the daughter."

The next morning Mrs. Parkinson related to her daughter what had taken place at the séance the night before, omitting, of course, every thing that had reference to the spirit's original proposal that she should herself marry Brown.

Violet heard what her mother had to say without excitement. Since the news of the wreck of the *Placentia* nothing appeared to interest her.

"Surely, mother, you do not believe that it was my father's spirit?" she answered listlessly.

"I cannot think otherwise, am I likely to forget what your father was like?" replied her mother. "And, Violet, to come to the point, what do you think about Brown?"

"Mother!" It was only one word, but it contained a whole sentence.

"Well dear, I know he is no longer young, and he isn't any longer handsome, but you see your father seemed to wish it; and—"

"Enough, mother; I will not hear another word. The creature—I will not call him a man—is odious in my sight. And how can you speak to me about such

a thing, when my heart is almost broken about poor Jack?"

And with tears starting to her eyes, she got up and left the room.

"I knew how it would be," remarked the mother; "but as it was *his* wish, I was bound to speak to her about it."

CHAPTER XXII.

AN INTERCEPTED DESPATCH.

To return to Alston. He arrived safely at Harbour Grace, where he bade "Big Deer" adieu, and took the train to St. John's. Before leaving, he despatched a message to Violet, telling her of his safety. He addressed it to Franzensbad, thinking she would still be there.

On arriving at St. John's, he found that Mr. Watson was in the city! and "the King's" joy at finding his companion had escaped the watery grave to which every one had consigned him, was unbounded.

"As for those Indians," he said, "they beat many a pure-blooded white man out and out for downright warmth of heart and nobility of character. I shall send 'em enough blankets to last 'em for some

winters to come, and I shall give instructions that they can have as much powder and shot as they like to ask for."

"The King," now that his yacht was lost, had abandoned his intention of journeying round the world, and had arranged to return to England the next day.

"All my affairs here are in ship-shape order," he said to Alston; "and there is nothing that I should stay for; and you, young man, are anxious, I suppose, to get back home as soon as possible."

Alston nodded in the affirmative.

"Well, we'll go back together; and I'll be your best man at the wedding—unless, of course, you have a better man in view; and if ever you want a friend—well here's my hand."

Alston grasped his outstretched hand, and it was arranged that they should return together on the morrow. Respecting the supposed appearance of his mother's spirit, "the King" did not once speak, and Alston did not refer to the subject.

When the time for the departure of the mail-boat arrived, the landing-stage was crowded with people, for the news of Alston's miraculous escape had spread abroad; and every one was anxious to catch a sight of the one who had had such an extraordinary adventure.

The newspaper reporters came down to the vessel to interview him; but he politely declined to be interviewed, and the disappointed reporters accordingly drew upon their imagination for the particulars.

In one paper Alston was saved from drowning only to be threatened with death at the stake, which fate he escaped by flight with the assistance of the daughter of the chief of the tribe, in whose hands he had fallen.

The other paper scoffed at the statement that Alston's life was in danger whilst with the Indians, and explained that the Micmacs were a peaceful class of people, who lived principally by fishing. It was not within the remembrance of any living man, the paper went on to say, that the Micmacs had scalped a foe, much less put one to death at the stake; and it suggested that the rival reporter was suffering from Fennimore Cooper on the brain.

There was some truth, it explained, in the statement that the daughter of the chief had fallen in love with Alston, and it was chiefly owing to her skill as a nurse that his life, after he had been rescued from the sea, had been saved. But the reporter on the other paper had got the wrong side of the story. The truth was that Alston, out of gratitude, had married the young

squaw according to Indian marriage custom, and that he proposed petitioning the Newfoundland Government to recognize his marriage as legal. He, it was asserted, would—for he was deeply attached to the young girl, who was said to be beautiful—remarry her later on according to the English marriage law. Meanwhile the young girl was detained by her father pending the payment of three sacks of potatoes, two bushels of flour, and a gallon of whisky, due from Alston under the marriage contract, and Alston had gone to England to consult with his family lawyer upon the subject.

* * * * * *

The morning after the materialization séance, Brown, seeing the telegraph boy approaching the house, went out to meet him.

"Well, boy, what have you got to-day?" he said in his cheeriest manner.

"A couple of telegrams, sir."

He took the messages from the boy's hand, and gave him sixpence. Brown at times was really generous—to the extent of sixpence.

The first telegram was addressed to the medium; and he opened it hurriedly.

It was from the president of the Psychical Exploration Society, and informed him that through lack of funds, it had been

decided to dissolve the Society, and he was requested to at once furnish a statement of receipts and expenditure for the past year.

The news of the collapse of the Institution was not altogether unexpected, but it caused Brown considerable annoyance. "This means," he muttered, "a loss of a clear 300*l.* a year; besides," and he turned pale at the thought, "how can I furnish a statement of account? Some of my enemies have been prying into matters, I suppose; curse them. But," and he smiled grimly, "I'll be even with them. I shall marry a rich girl and be able to square matters, and to chuck up everything connected with spiritualism."

He put the telegram in his pocket and looked at the other one, as yet unopened.

It was addressed to Mees, Milady Violette Parkinson Brown.*

"Curious way of directing a telegram," he thought, "comes from a foreigner, I suppose." He fingered it inquiringly awhile, and then opened it.

He gave a start as he read its contents.

It was Alston's despatch re-directed from Franzensbad. (Violet, it should

* The other day, oddly enough, I received a letter from Franzensbad, addressed as follows:— Der Chevalier, Mrs. Stuart Cumberland, Esquire.—S. C.

be stated, had left money for that purpose.)

"By heaven he's alive, then. D—n him," he growled.

"I must strike at once," he added after a while, during which he mentally heaped further imprecations on the young man's head. "I must make the attempt before she hears of his being alive; and I haven't much time to lose, for the news 'll be in the papers this evening. D—n the papers." And d——g everything in general, and Alston in particular, he hastened back to the house, where he found Violet in the library.

* * * * *

Violet was sitting reading when Brown entered. She got up and prepared to leave.

"I hope I don't disturb you," he remarked deferentially.

She did not answer him.

"May I beg a moment of you," he added, sidling to her.

"Say what you have to say, and let it be brief," and she drew herself further from him.

"Your mother, I presume, has already spoken to you about—"

"About what, sir?"

This very sharply.

Brown coughed and hesitated. The young lady's manner was not inviting.

"About my love for you," he said, taking the plunge without further hesitation.

If a look could kill, the look that Violet gave Brown would have finished him on the spot. But looks do not kill, and the medium returned her gaze with unblushing self-possession.

"I know I am no longer young, but—"

"I dare you to say another word," broke in the young girl. "I detest you; indeed I never knew how much I could hate any one until I saw you."

With this parting shot she left him.

Brown's face turned purple with rage, and his hands twitched nervously.

"So that is the way you receive me. But I'll break you in, by heaven I will, and before many days are over your head, too."

CHAPTER XXIII.

GOOD NEWS.

VIOLET avoided Brown for the rest of the day, and took her meals in her room, pleading illness.

Poor girl, she was almost heart-broken.

The suspense was killing her. She did not give up hope, although there appeared to be no possibility of his having been saved.

More than a fortnight ago she had read the telegram, announcing the safety of the rest of those who were on board the *Placentia*, in which it was stated that her lover had fallen overboard. Nothing further had been published, with the exception of a despatch, stating that his body had not been recovered.

But when one loves as this young girl did, hope dies hard; and although all the world believed him dead, she would, until she saw his dead body with her own eyes, believe him to be still alive.

In addition to the natural hope within her, she had a presentiment that he had not perished; and every day she expected to hear that he was safe.

At length hope was rewarded.

The good news reached her, and Sarah was the bearer of it.

Sarah got it from her sweetheart, Tom the constable, and she hastened to tell her young mistress.

Violet was in her room at the time; and immediately Sarah, who was radiant with delight, entered, she instinctively guessed that she was the bearer of welcome news.

"Oh, miss," she said, "what do you think my Tom—I mean the Police Constable—tells me?"

Violet started, and her pale face was turned upon the girl in anxious inquiry.

"He says, miss, that Mr. Alston is alive, and—"

She paused, for her young mistress gave a deep sigh and staggered as if about to fall. But grasping the back of a chair, Violet steadied herself.

"Yes, Sarah, yes—go on," she said in broken tones. "I am listening; tell me all."

"It's quite true, miss," replied Sarah, "that Mr. Alston wasn't drowned, and here's the newspaper to prove it."

She produced a crumpled copy of an evening newspaper, and handed it to her young mistress.

"It is true; thank God!" said Violet fervently, as she read the news the paper contained.

It consisted of a telegram from St. John's.

"Mr. Alston, who it will be remembered was on board the *Placentia* when that vessel was wrecked off the east coast of this island, three weeks ago, and who was given up for lost, escaped in a most miraculous manner. He was rescued by

some Red Indians, and arrived in St. John's to-day. He leaves with Mr. Watson, the 'Copper King,' by the mail-boat for Liverpool, to-morrow."

At that moment there was a ring at the front door bell, and Sarah, who had rushed down-stairs to answer it, passing Brown on the way, returned with a telegram.

With trembling fingers Violet tore open the envelope.

It was a message in the following words, from her lover :—

"*Sailed, all well. Message repeated. Franzensbad.*

"JACK."

CHAPTER XXIV.

BROWN'S LAST CARD.

BROWN professed to be rejoiced at the news of Alston's safety, and he, needless to say, did not, after his rebuff, venture to press his suit again, but assumed an expression of the deepest humility every time he saw her ; but he had by no means relinquished the idea of marrying Violet ; and as he was unable to gain her by fair means, he was determined to do so by foul. And the course he adopted to bring

about this result was an extraordinary one.

Violet, although a disbeliever in Spiritualism, was a firm believer in mesmerism; and, as a noted mesmerist once said, she was one of the best "subjects" he ever operated upon. She was readily brought under what is called "the influence;" and her lover had from the first strongly urged her not to attend either public or private mesmeric exhibitions. "It is not good for you," he said; "you are too nervous and emotional, and your health will suffer in the end. You must never allow yourself to be mesmerized again. Promise me, dearest."

And she promised him.

Now Brown, who was somewhat of a mesmerist, or had the faculty of making certain people believe that he was—which is about the same thing—conceived the idea of bringing the young girl under his influence.

"If I can only succeed in mesmerizing her," he thought, "I may be able to get her to marry me."

But he had to proceed cautiously, for so loathsome was he in Violet's eyes, that she, as has been shown, would scarcely look at him, and no opportunity had been afforded of bringing his influence to bear upon her.

But in the great joy which Violet felt at the coming of her lover, she even forgot her animosity to Brown.

"Jack will attend to him when he returns," she said; and meanwhile she tolerated the medium's presence. Brown did not fail to take advantage of this, and by degrees he succeeded in getting an influence over her, the terrible strain her nerves had undergone causing her to become more susceptible than ever to mesmeric influences.

Presently she began to fear Brown, and found herself involuntarily shuddering every time she caught his eye. She felt that he was trying to mesmerize her, and the idea filled her with horror. She remembered what her lover had said about the effects of mesmerism upon her, and she tried to combat the influence the medium was trying to establish over her.

About this time Mrs. Parkinson took a chill. At first she made light of it, but eventually she had to take to her bed. Even then she would not send for a doctor, and Brown, whilst controlled by the spirit of no less a personage than the great Dr. Jenner, duly prescribed for her. She, however, got worse instead of better; but refused to have the family doctor called in.

Violet was greatly alarmed about her mother, and her nerves, which had undergone such severe strains of late, threatened, under this new trial, to completely break down.

This was Brown's opportunity, and he, needless to say, did not neglect it.

He knew that Alston might return at any moment, and that with his return there would be an end to his chances, and so, one evening, when Violet seemed more depressed than usual, he determined to make a final effort to bring her under his influence.

"You look ill, Miss Parkinson," he said, gliding silently into the room where she was sitting.

Violet started, but made no reply.

"Yes, you look quite ill;" and he seated himself in front of her. "Had you not better go to bed?" he added, sympathetically, fixing his eyes upon her.

Violet made some reply about having to go to her mother's room as soon as she was awake, and tried to evade the medium's piercing gaze. But his glance seemed to attract her, and looking up, she saw him making passes in front of her. A great shudder ran through her frame, and her blood turned icy cold. She felt herself growing chill and numb and powerless to

move; but with a supreme effort she just managed to keep control over herself.

"I am going to my mother's room," she said, rising with apparent difficulty from her seat.

"No! you will stay here," hissed the medium, rising and confronting her.

She made a move towards the door, and he stopped her with a pass.

"Sit down," he said. "Do you hear? Down in that chair." He raised his hands threateningly, and then brought them down in front of her.

His eyes glared fiercely into hers, and his voice seemed to deafen her.

She shrank back despairingly in her chair. Her will was broken.

Brown watched her with a grim chuckle.

"She is mine now," he muttered; "she cannot escape me, and I can make her do as I wish."

Unholy thoughts filled his mind, and he pictured the poor girl falling powerless before him, like a bird under the fascination of a snake.

"I will make her love me, and make her hate him, curse him," he said; "and when he returns, he will find me standing in his shoes."

Then, making a few more passes over

Violet, he said, looking her full in the face, "I love you, Violet."

She did not speak, but looked at him with widely-dilated eyes. There was no understanding in her gaze.

"Yes, I love you; do you hear me?" he continued, "I am Brown—you know Brown. I am the medium who controls the spirit world, and can make all men and women subservient to my will. You usen't to like me, but you do so now. You understand, I am your lover. Your other lover is dead—drowned off the coast of Newfoundland. You believe he is alive, but it isn't true. Some one may come and personate him, but your real lover is dead, and you will never see him again."

At the mention of her sweetheart Violet trembled violently, and for a moment it seemed as if she would break from the spell under which she was held. But the medium renewed his hand-passes, and she was subdued again.

* * * * *

Outside, a séance of a different character was being held.

Bobby and Sarah were love-making Bobby had come to pop the question in earnest, and had asked the sprightly Sarah to name the day.

Sarah, nothing loth, had consented to

become his wife, and had in consequence made the worthy policeman supremely happy.

This meeting took place in the old spot; and so engrossed were they in measuring each other's necks with their arms, that they did not hear footsteps coming hurriedly towards them.

In another moment the form of a man stood beside them in the gathering gloom.

His hand fell upon Bobby's shoulder.

Bobby turned and saw Alston.

"What at it again, Bobby? and you Sarah, why, what will cook say?" said the young man laughingly.

Bobby made some remark about every man having a right to kiss the woman he was engaged to; whilst Sarah maintained a discreet silence.

"Quite so, Bobby; but you ought not to do your love-making whilst on duty. For, whilst you are here, hen-stealers might be robbing the roost, or housebreakers walking away with the plate."

"No fear of that, sir," replied the policeman; "it's an awful quiet neighbourhood, this, and there ain't a house or a hen-roost as gets broken into from year's end to year's end."

"Nevertheless," said Alston, who was anxious to be rid of him, "you had better

take a last look round, for it just happens that whilst three hundred and sixty-four days see everything safe and sound, the three hundred and sixty-fifth is the day when the burglar decides to ply his trade."

"All right, sir; no fear of my neglecting my duty, sir. The little I has to do I does well, as the superintendent will tell you; and it just happens that I'm to be promoted next week;" and with a farewell snatch at Sarah's hand, he moved off.

"Now, Sarah," said Alston, when they were alone, "I am sorry to have disturbed your love-making, but the front gate was fastened, and I had to come this way. But how is she?" Is she here or in Franzensbad?

Sarah did not need telling who "she" was.

"Miss Violet, sir, is 'ere, and is, I'm sorry to say, somewhat middling. The news about you terribly upset 'er. But she 'eld up wonderful, sir, for she wouldn't believe as you was dead, sir, although every one said as 'ow you was. But now, poor young lady, she has got a hextra trouble, for her mother is very hill."

"Nothing dangerous, I hope," said Alston earnestly.

"I don't think so, sir; at least, she will

probably get all right if she does not have a bad turn. It commenced with a cold, and she wouldn't have any one to doctor her save the spirit medium."

"What! is that scoundrel still here?" asked Alston, a dark look coming in his eyes.

"Yes, sir; and between you and me, sir, I don't think as he means any good towards Miss Violet; 'e is always following 'er about, and watching 'er with 'is crafty eyes, and once or twice I have seen 'im move his hands behind her back like the mesmerists do, as if 'e was willing 'er to do something that 'e wanted."

"Good God," broke in Alston, "the blackguard; thank heaven I have arrived in time. But where is Miss Violet?"

"I left 'er in the drawing-room alone a few moments ago; for my Tom had only just come, sir, when you came."

In another moment Alston was striding across the lawn to the drawing-room.

The blinds were drawn, but a corner of one of the blinds had caught in being lowered, and gave him a glimpse of the interior of the room.

The sight filled him with horror. There, lying back in the chair, was his darling, and bending over her, as if in the act of embracing her, was Brown.

He could see that she was mesmerized, and incapable of resisting the medium's will.

"The Indian's magic was true!" said the young man, with a groan. He felt the long window which opened on to the lawn. It was unfastened. He drew it open, and with a spring, was in the room.

In another moment his hands were about the medium's throat, choking the hateful words he was pouring into the young girl's ears.

Brown was powerless in his grasp, and his struggles to release himself were unavailing. Meanwhile Violet lay back in a trance, heeding nothing that was going on around her.

"You will kill me," gasped the medium.

"So much the better, you scoundrel," hotly replied Alston, shaking him violently. Then thinking that in his anger he might in reality take his life, he dragged him to the window.

There was a crash of falling glass, and splintering wood, and the form of Brown fell out on the flower-pots below.

With that crash Violet awoke.

"My darling," she said, springing towards Jack. "He said you were dead,

and that I should never see you again. But you are alive, dear, and you have come back to me."

And with a hysterical sob she fell fainting in his arms.

CHAPTER XXV.

AT LAST.

Brown had played his last card, and had lost. The game was in the hands of his enemy, and he lay bruised and bleeding amongst the broken flower-pots.

He lay there for awhile in a state of semi-unconsciousness, for his fall had been a severe one.

Presently he raised himself, and stood shaking his fist in the direction of the drawing-room, cursing and groaning the while. So engrossed was he in this task, that he did not hear the heavy footfall of Bobby—who had been attracted by the sound of smashing glass—behind him.

"Who are you, and what's your little game?" said Bobby, grasping the blaspheming medium by the collar of his much-damaged coat. "Let's have a look at you," and he turned his bull's-eye on Brown's face. "Oh, you're the medium chap. What 'ave you been up to, eh?

Been chucked out? Well, you do look a pretty figure."

"I've been grossly assaulted, constable," shrieked Brown, "and I mean to have the man who did it prosecuted. He's in there, and his name is Alston. I charge you, constable, to fetch him out and lock him up."

"I saw no blows struck, and I have no power to go into the house and lock a man up on your word. If you've been assaulted, you can apply for a summons to-morrow, and the facts can be gone into before the Bench. Meanwhile, you can't stop here creating a disturbance; and your language ain't, I may tell you, any of the choicest."

"You are as bad as he is," growled the medium, "and I'll have you proceeded against for conspiracy, for you are in league with the ruffian who assaulted me. You think I don't know you. You think I haven't seen you flirting with the housemaid at the bottom of the garden. A pretty policeman you are;" and Brown fairly foamed at the mouth with rage.

"Come, none of your sauce," replied Bobby, "for I ain't a-going to stand it."

At this moment Sarah put in an appearance.

"What is all this wrangling about?" she said. "What, is that wretch still

here?" she added, looking with assumed surprise at the spluttering medium.

"Yes; I found him cussing and swearing a good 'un, and threatening all sorts of things against the people of the house."

"The wretch," replied Sarah, indignantly, "and the missus lying almost dying upstairs, and Miss Violet unconscious in a faint. Take him away, Tom; he ain't fit to stop here another minute. See him down to the station; and he can send for his things in the morning."

"Who are you to order me off the premises, curse you?" shouted Brown.

"They are my missus's orders," replied Sarah, and the lie rolled glibly off her tongue. "And so you had better be off at once."

Brown stood for awhile speechless with rage, and it was with difficulty he could find words to reply.

"You lie," he snarled; "your mistress never sent such a message, and I don't mean to go."

"You 'ear him, Tom; he called me a liar. Me, as you knows never told a lie. Out with 'im."

"Come along," said the valiant policeman, digging his knuckles in Brown's neck. Brown raised his hand as if to strike him.

"You had better not," said Bobby, grasping his truncheon.

The medium thought so too; and he let his hand fall by his side.

Then he was hustled across the lawn and into the high-road, and the gates of Parkhurst closed upon him for the last time.

Brown slept at an inn a little way out of the village that night. The next morning he arose bruised and dejected, but he did not apply for a summons against Alston; for on his anger cooling down, he felt that his wisest course would be to keep quiet. He could not face the ordeal of a cross-examination.

He wrote, however, a long letter to Mrs. Parkinson, giving his version of the assault, and begging her not to be prejudiced against him in his absence.

"I need hardly remind you," he concluded, "of this man's blind hatred of me, simply because I am a medium. I pray for your speedy return to health, and a quick riddance of the presence of one who is sure to be as injurious to your chances of recovery as he is prejudicial to your progress as a medium. Of my mediumship you have had ample proof; and you are well acquainted with my devotion to the Cause. You also, I think, are aware of my devotion to you."

This letter he sent, together with a request that his personal effects should be given to the bearer.

In an hour or so the messenger returned. He handed Brown a note. It was not in Mrs. Parkinson's handwriting.

Brown's hand trembled as he tore open the envelope, and his knees knocked together when he read its contents.

The writer was Alston, and it was by no means an agreeable epistle.

Brown was told in unmistakable terms that he was a rascal, and he was dared to set foot in Parkhurst again.

"As soon as Mrs. Parkinson is sufficiently recovered to attend to such matters," the letter went on, "steps will be taken to prosecute you for obtaining money under false pretences; for undeniable evidence of your rascality as a medium and dishonesty as a man is in our possession. You ask for your luggage, and it is sent by bearer, with the exception of the "magnetized bath," containing the wigs, waxen hands, and other spirit paraphernalia with which you imposed upon the people of this house. These articles will be kept pending the action at law which will be brought against you."

Brown let the letter fall from his hand with a groan.

They knew all, then. The secret of his covered bath had been disclosed. The game was up, and he must make a bolt for it, for with such evidence in the hands of his enemies there was no chance of proving his innocence.

In this bath were secreted the muslin, wigs, hands, masks, and other properties with which he rigged out his "spirit forms."

He had taken the bath with him to every house he visited in the capacity of a medium. It was spacious, and held everything he required in the matter of Spiritual make up. It gave rise to no suspicion, and he always assured his host or hostess that he derived great benefit from bathing in a vessel which had been specially magnetized by powerful spirits. "I take it with me always," he would say; "for I dare not run the risk of endangering my mediumship by bathing in strange baths."

But the inquisitive Sarah finding the bath unlocked had opened it, and at once made Alston acquainted with its contents.

Brown took an early train to London, and before the end of the week, was on his way to America. He knew that Alston was a man of his word, and he thought it advisable to seek the hospitable shores of

the United States before the machinery of the law could be set in motion against him.

And so Brown, for the time being, passes out of our story.

After a period of uncertainty, Mrs. Parkinson—thanks in a great measure to Alston's unremitting attention—recovered. But she was only a shadow of her old self. All her hardness and stubbornness of character had left her, and she was truly another person.

She no longer objected to Alston, and finally gave her consent to her daughter's marriage with him.

They were married at Arlington. It was a quiet affair, only the immediate friends of the family being present. Amongst those friends was Henry Watson, the "Copper King."

The honeymoon, I may tell my fair readers, who are invariably interested in such things, was spent in North Devon, and any of them who may themselves have been honeymooning in that romantic corner of England's fairest county, will readily imagine what a delightful time they had of it there.

Alston is a rising man, and a general favourite in his profession. He talks of taking a trip to Newfoundland, accompanied by his wife.

He wrote at once on his arrival in England to La-ki-wa, and on his marriage he sent her his own and Violet's photograph taken together.

She wrote in reply:

"*La-ki-wa has no likeness to send; but she hopes that her image is still bright in her white brother's eyes. She will never forget him; may he never forget her. As La-ki-wa is the sister of her white brother, so is she the sister of his squaw. La-ki-wa has said.*"

Mrs Parkinson, needless to say, still believes in Spiritualism—for once a Spiritualist, always a Spiritualist—but she fights shy of professional spirit-mediums. Her experience of Brown has been sufficient to last her to the end of her days.

"He was," she says, "a genuine medium in many ways, and I have seen him produce manifestations which could not have been the outcome of human agency; but he was undoubtedly a bad man, and allowed his craving for riches to corrupt his mediumship. Only fancy," she said to a bosom friend, "his having a facsimile of my dear husband's beard made out of horse-hair—his beard, which as you know, my dear, was so soft and silky. After that I could believe anything bad of the man."

It was the discovery of the deceased alderman's "materialized beard" in the

bath that chiefly convinced Mrs. Parkinson of Brown's imposture. Had it been made of genuine hair she might have been disposed to look at the discovery in a different light, but the fact of its being made out of "horrid, coarse horse-hair," as she put it, disgusted her beyond measure.

* * * * *

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The lunatic makes a dash at the retreating form of his visitors, and, as the door closes upon him, sinks with a yell upon the floor.

A week later the lifeless body of Brown the medium is found suspended from the gas-bracket in his cell.

[*The Dramatic Rights are reserved by the Author, who is preparing a Stage version of the story himself.*]

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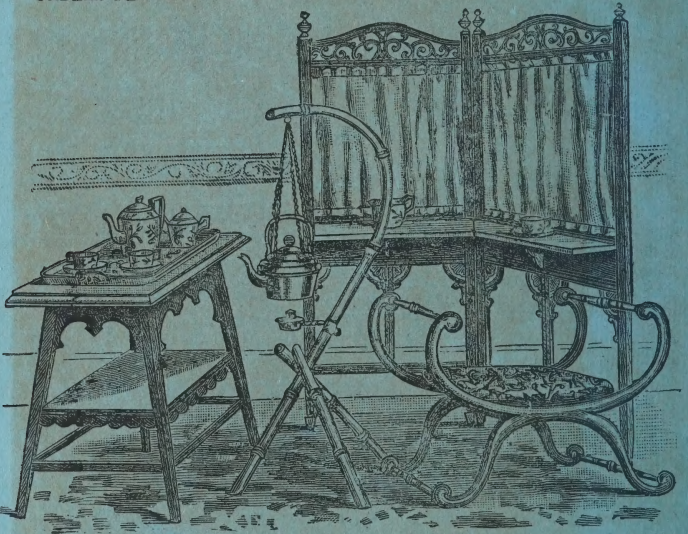

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